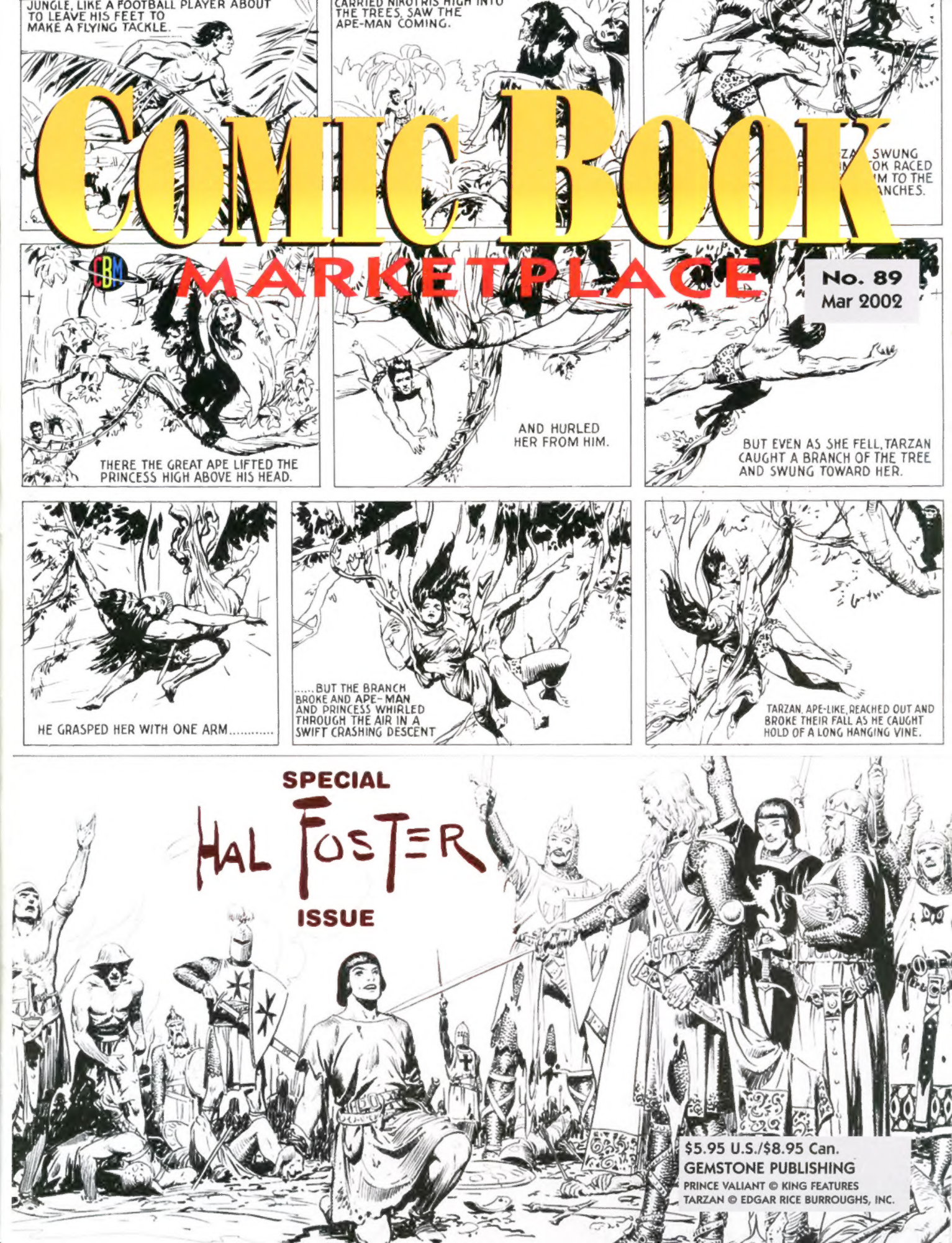
JUNGLE, LIKE A FOOTBALL PLAYER ABOUT TO LEAVE HIS FEET TO MAKE A FLYING TACKLE.
CARRIED NIKOTRIS HIGH INTO THE TREES, SAW THE APE-MAN COMING.
SWUNG
OK RACED
M TO THE
ANCHES.
THERE THE GREAT APE LIFTED THE PRINCESS HIGH ABOVE HIS HEAD.
AND HURLED HER FROM HIM.
BUT EVEN AS SHE FELL, TARZAN CAUGHT A BRANCH OF THE TREE AND SWUNG TOWARD HER.
HE GRASPED HER WITH ONE ARM.....
.....BUT THE BRANCH BROKE AND APE-MAN AND PRINCESS WHIRLED THROUGH THE AIR IN A SWIFT CRASHING DESCENT
TARZAN, APE-LIKE, REACHED OUT AND BROKE THEIR FALL AS HE CAUGHT HOLD OF A LONG HANGING VINE.
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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 89
Mar 2002

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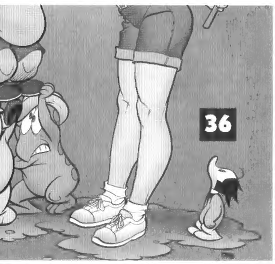

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John Buscema

Artist John Buscema died Thursday, January 10 of stomach cancer at the age of 74. He had been diagnosed with stomach cancer in the fall of 2001.

Buscema began his comics career at Timely Comics (later Marvel) in 1948 and worked in the industry on a number of titles until going into semi-retirement in 1996. Buscema's career spanned many genres including western comics, super-heroes and gritty action stories. Most recently, Buscema's *Just Imagine Stan Lee with John Buscema Creating Superman*, was released by DC Comics in September.

According to the John Buscema Offical Website and Trading Post, e-mailed well wishes and remembrances to Buscema's surviving family can be sent to the following address: johnbuscema2002@yahoo.com.

Hal Foster hometown honor

I had a call today from Cal Johnson, the owner of Strange Adventures Book Shop in Halifax, Nova Scotia (birthplace of Hal Foster). He said the book is selling well, but the BIG news is that he and other citizens took the book before the Halifax City Council. The Council members were impressed with all of the biographical research and how Hal's family dated back to the time of Lord Halifax. The Council then approved the building of a Prince Valiant statue to honor their favored son. The statue will also contain a plaque with a short biography of Hal and his famous creation. This will probably be one of only a handful of statues ever dedicated to a comic's creator (Walt Disney comes to mind), and I've offered to donate my services to help with the design and write the biographical sketch.

—Brian Kane

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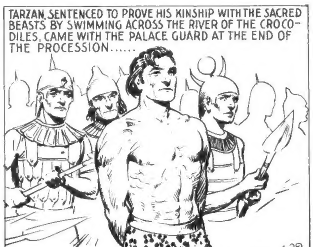
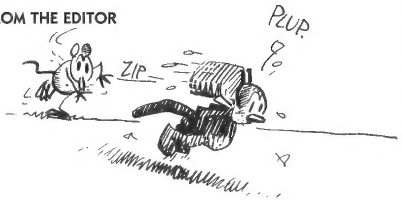

TARZAN SENTENCED TO PROVE HIS KINSHIP WITH THE SACRED BEASTS BY SWIMMING ACROSS THE RIVER OF THE CROCODILES, CAME WITH THE PALACE GUARD AT THE END OF THE PROCESSION.....

TARZAN © EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS INC.



Mugwumps and Apes

This is an impossible job.

A mugwump job, for sure.

It's the first time I have ever tried to please such a wide audience whose tastes run the gamut from Golden Age comics to manga. In all of my previous publishing, I was throwing my pitches to a very specific audience—the *EC Library*, Carl Barks Donald Duck book, Superman book, *Edgar Rice Burroughs Library of Illustration*, etc. I knew exactly what my target audience wanted to see. But in *CBM*, I am scatter-shooting. The Golden Agers have little interest in the Silver Age and no interest at all in Bronze...the "old comics history" buffs are tired of articles about one super-hero after another...those who enjoy the classic newspaper strips from 1930-1950 never get enough to satisfy their thirst...and so it goes.

So the next time one of you little Ignatzes out there kreases my gourd with a brick, you should know that I am pretty hard-headed.

I'll probably continue to sit on this fence, with my mug on one side and my wump on the other, until the powers-that-be intercede, and keep dishing out this mulligan stew which hopefully will contain a little bit of something for everyone.

Hal Foster is my favorite artist of realistic comic strips. His 1932-1937 *Tarzan* Sunday pages were, to me, the peak of his artistic output, more specifically his pages from 1932 through 1934. In this issue, we pay careful attention to Hal Foster's life and works, and to the new book by Brian Kane, a long overdue examination of the career of this consummate professional illustrator. The longer I am involved with comic art, the more I realize that it was Foster who forged the mold which produced Alex Raymond, Jack Kirby, Frank Frazetta, Wally Wood and all the comic artists who followed. When the comic book business sprang from nothing in the late 1930s, the men drawing the pictures were, for the most part, emulating Hal Foster. We dedicate this issue to his memory.

BROTHER OF THE BEASTS

Russ

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Romita line art used to create the cover of Spectacular Spider-Man #1

Journey into Mystery #83, CGC NM- 9.2

More Fun Comics #54, CGC VF 8.0

Vault of Horror #28 (Gaines File), CGC NM/MT 9.8, just one of over 125 CGC-graded Gaines File comics!

Joe Jusko Dr. Doom painting

Famous Funnies #213 cover, plus a dozen other Golden Age covers!

L'il Abner Shmoo strip dated 10-27-48

All-Flash Quarterly #1, CGC VF/NM 9.0

Frazetta Tarzan and Ape piece, part of Russ Cochran's fabulous Tarzan collection

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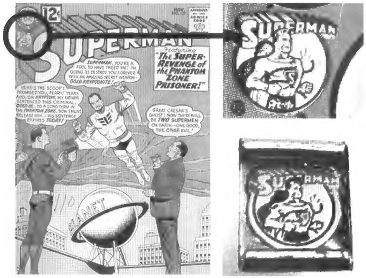
More powerful than a logo-motif

I recently spoke to Jeff Vaughn regarding an interesting Superman oddity. Attached are two scans. The first is the cover of *Superman* #157. The second is the 1940s Superman Secret Compartment ring. I recently discovered that *Superman* #157 has a Golden Age logo on the cover. This is very odd as the comic is a Silver Age book. I have been researching this logo and cannot find it on any other issues of Superman during that time. The image is very similar to the secret compartment ring image. I think this might be an interesting oddity for *CBM*.

Tom Gordon, Monumental Collectibles
www.monumentalcollectibles.com



Statue? Gesundheit!

I feel compelled to respond to reader Yoram Matzkin who, in his letter in *CBM* #87, referred to new features such as "...articles on the newer books, statues, etc...." as a "disappointment" better left to the pages of *Wizard*. While Mr. Matzkin is certainly entitled to his opinion, I think he's being a bit narrow-minded and shortsighted in his failure to recognize the legitimacy of such features in the pages of *CBM*. I feel eminently qualified on two fronts to rebut Mr. Matzkin's assertions.

First, I have been an avid comic reader/fan/collector for nearly 40 years, having bought my first newsstand comic book in early 1962. As a long time fan, I'm genuinely excited by the wide range of new products on the market targeted to the Golden and Silver Age collectors. I think *CBM* is performing a valuable service by informing older collectors that the world did not end in late 1971, when comic book cover prices rose from 12 cents to 15 cents; that there is still material of interest to them being produced. Second, I am the writer of the monthly "Collectable Character Statues" column that so upsets Mr. Matzkin's sensibilities. If you had read my inaugural column in *CBM* #84, Mr. Matzkin (actually READ it, not just flipped past it in disgust), I explained how the world of character statues is very much pertinent to Golden and Silver Age collectors. New features such as my statue column, J.C. Vaughn's "New and Noteworthy," and Bill Baker's "Inspiration Central" serve the twofold purpose of opening the eyes of long-time collectors to new and related frontiers, and of extending a welcome mat to newer/younger fans/collectors whose first encounter with Golden and/or Silver Age comics and characters just may be such new products as statues, or DC Archives hard-covers, or Marvel Masterworks hard-covers, or an article about the early creators who inspired their current favorite writers and artists to become comic creators themselves. By inviting newcomers into the *CBM* fold with such features, we expose them also to the rich history and tapestry that are the Golden and Silver Ages of comics. What this hobby does NOT need is snobbery and exclusion. If we don't cultivate new members to the family of Golden and Silver Age collectors, in 20 years there will be no one to preserve and honor the legacy, because we've closed membership and locked the door behind our dwindling ranks.

Open your eyes, Mr. Matzkin. Everything new is NOT evil to be shunned. It could also be the beacon to welcome our heirs and successors.

Mike Wilbur, via e-mail

Rave for Dave

I thoroughly enjoy *Comicbook Marketplace* but issue 87 was missing something. It was missing a contribution from Doc Dave Winewicz. You should have Doc Dave in EVERY issue. His insights into Frazetta are a cut above everyone else's writing. I like the fact that he talks about art and ideas, not just the usual facts and dollars that usually dominate all the discussions. I actually learn something every time I read his stuff. Bring back Doc Dave!

John DiNova

Doc Dave was back in 88 with another essay on Frazetta art, that time about various types of Frazetta line

a. A Dark Knight detective driven by vengeance. b. A story of tragedy overcome by true heroism. c. The embodiment of American ideals. d. A wedding with at least one unknown participant. e. High-flying adventure with a patriotic flair. f. Defenders of freedom and justice. g. An ageless all-American teen. h. A young girl turned savior of the innocent.

a. b. c. d. e. f. g. h.

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art, and in this issue he contributes an essay on Frazetta and Foster and a review of the new Foster Book. I do not foresee an article about Frazetta in every issue of CBM, *but so far, Dave has analyzed separate aspects of Frazetta's art in each essay. As long as he can think of new things to say, and give us new insights into the "magic" touch that suffuses most of Frank Frazetta's work, we will continue to show them to our readers.*

Russ Cochran

Do we rate?

After almost 50 years of being the brunt of easy potshots and derisive snickering from the comics community, it might be time for Frederick Wertham, or at least some of his motives, to be defended in the pages of a comic collector's magazine.

We all know who Wertham was. He was the psychologist in the early 1950s who published the famous book *Seduction of the Innocent*, where he claimed that horror and crime comics led to juvenile delinquency. His work and the large public acceptance of it ultimately led to a Senate investigation, where people like Bill Gaines of EC did not acquit themselves very well, and finally to an industry-created Comics Code, which effectively killed off horror and crime comics for decades. Even today, mainstream comics are tamer in imagery than those classic pre-Code titles.

Wertham's arguments about comics leading to a life of crime are indeed overblown. But there was nothing overblown about the general public's concern about the content, and especially the covers, of many of the comic books that were gracing the newsstands. For those of us who have young children, it's easy to understand the public's reaction to the increasingly garish and violent imagery that was being placed at the eye level of an eight-year old at the drugstore, every month.

We all tend to forget that the vast majority of readers back then was under the age of 12 (despite the assertions of a recent letter in *CBM* which claimed EC stories were "written for adults"). I know that I have had to keep my latest copy of *CBM* turned down, so that my young children won't see the very large and colorful drawing of a man strangling a woman in a rowboat. Certainly I don't want my children seeing these things at eye-level at the neighborhood convenience store. Nor do I want them perusing through comics of people getting axes in their heads, or having their entrails consumed, or having ice picks pushed at their eyeballs, until they are at a certain age where they are emotionally equipped to handle that kind of material.

What Wertham and the Comics Industry could not conceive of at the time was a ratings system for comics, much like the one we have for music, or the movies. A ratings system requires that publishers, dealers, and parents will all participate in evaluating the product that is sold to children, and while it's not perfect, it is a decent compromise in an open society. But with no experience with rating products for age-appropriateness, the 1950s response was simply to ban all horror and crime material in comics, which was of course censorship.

It is worth noting that even had the comics industry tried a ratings system in response to the hearings, it's doubtful that Gaines and company would have embraced it. Let us not be too quick to make these men into anti-censorship heroes. There was money at stake here, and most if not all of it came from the pockets of children. We adults who collect and love these comics are only too willing, if the recent cover of *CBM* is any indication, to glorify this genre in the name of high art. But we must acknowledge that in the early 1950s the comics industry was completely unable and unwilling to do the right thing when it came to protecting the sensibilities of young children.

So Frederick Wertham had to do it for them. It's too bad his initiative led to such a bruising clampdown on comics, to the point of censorship. But don't blame him. Blame the comics companies for not having the foresight and moral courage to take the initiative themselves, by ensuring that their "adult product" did indeed go to a more mature readership.

Eric Martin, via e-mail

They've 'made their choice'

It has been said that democracy carries the seeds of its own destruction. The same could be said of the comics industry. The freedom of speech and expression that has returned to comics in these modern days is being abused. If the trend continues, the comics industry might not.

For years, I spent my comics budget on Silver and Gold back issues because I thought modern comics were inferior. A few years ago, I decided to try them again. I couldn't believe the language in *Sandman*, and the gore in *Spawn*, a kiddie favorite. I tried *The Darkness* because of the great art. But, no more. For the reasons that Steranko discussed, I'll buy no more comics with profanity, gore, or extreme sexual content. In fact, I'm just about down to *Tom Strong* and *Astro City*. And even Moore likes to pop in some "gd's" in *TS*, a retro book that appeals to young ages.

Meanwhile, I've spent hundreds of dollars recently on completing my Tarzan collection from Dell through DC. I'm also concentrating on my other favorite heroes, Superman and Batman, and (of course) Barks ducks.

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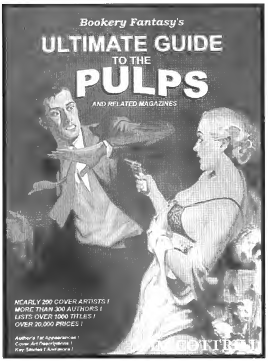

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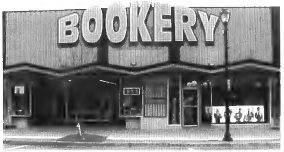

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bravery, honesty, morality and ethics. They knew right from wrong. These heroes didn't swear, didn't lie, didn't cheat, didn't shirk from duty, didn't lay the women. They fought for truth, justice and the American Way. They helped shape my life and served as my moral compass. I can't imagine a kid growing up with *The Darkness* as his guiding light.

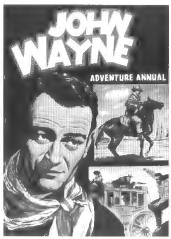
Mr. Steranko has it right. Some comic book creators—and companies—are now plainly on the side of evil. How proud I am that such a strong voice as Steranko's dares to tell the truth. Comic books speak to a large, impressionable audience of young people who are forming the ethical and moral foundations that they will live by for the rest of their lives. That gives great power to comic book companies and creators.

And with great power, there must also come great responsibility.

Lynn Woolley, www.BeLogical.com

Imagine a brand new issue of *Comic Book Marketplace* #87 and the first thing I actually read is the interview with Jim Steranko and his take on our grim American reality. I'm writing because others may criticize or ignore this piece. I believe the main problem is the growing influence of Satanists in our government, media, military and society in general. To glorify evil is to practice evil. This goes way beyond flashing the mark of the devil. I gave up my comic shop of 18 years because I was ashamed to sell the disgusting material being produced. As evidenced by the prior activity on the stock market, etc., it is now known for certain plenty of Americans knew in advance of the attacks. I am not saying anyone who produces these comics was involved, but the attitude "anything for a buck" (witness Enron) is an overriding concern for some people. I applaud *Comic Book Marketplace* and Jim Steranko for their display of integrity in dealing with this issue and urge your readers not to return to "normal," but to become more consciously aware of your country and the world.

Robert Pujol, St Louis, MO



(above left) **FC** #488 (Aug 53) as shown in **CBM** #79, (above right) a Walter Howarth British Western cover, (right) the **Super Thriller Annual** for 1958 attributed to Howarth

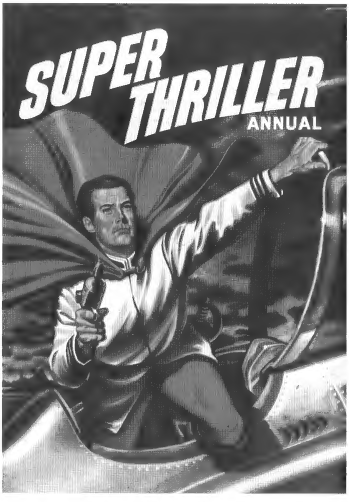
John Carter of...Manchester

Pat Calhoun's article ("Great Short Runs of the 50s") in *CBM*, dated June 2000, has nagged me since I read it. I had seen before the cover to *Four Color* #488, somewhere in the past.

His article states that the John Carter of Mars series lasted only three issues. I checked with the Gerber Book [*The Photo-Journal Guide to Comic Books*] and confirmed that this is indeed the case. *FC* #488 is the only one with a painted cover, but I believe I have found something of an enigma.

In the late 1950s, World Distributors of Manchester, England, produced many comics and books, reprinted from all manner of sources in America. These were

[continued on page 77]



Horror Hall of Fame -

Beware! Terror Tales

by Pat Calhoun

Fawcett released their second horror title in early 1952, *Beware! Terror Tales*, hosted by a chap who'd spent 2000 years studying the supernatural: the Mummy. Really, the most interesting thing about the character was not his concept but the artist they chose to package him: Bernard Bailey. Bailey had a long association with weird comics, starting with drawing DC's Spectre in 1940. Bailey also self-published an early horror title—*Spook*, in 1946.

In the late 1930s Bailey had befriended and served as a role model for a young Sheldon Moldoff, and it was Shelly who (a decade or so later) got Fawcett to try horror, with Shelly's *This Magazine is Haunted*, hosted by the exemplary Dr. Death. So the two old buddies became a one-two punch that helped make Fawcett's entries in the genre a force to be reckoned with. Bailey created the covers for the first few issues of *Beware!* and illustrated a story in #1.

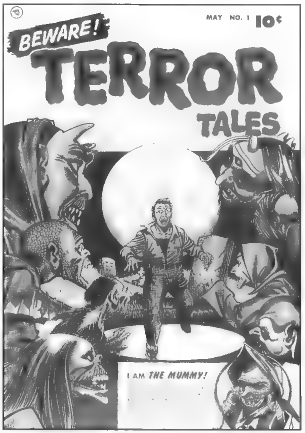
Fawcett horror was good! It was fantasy horror—always with an abundance of monsters, magic, and mad science!

Beware! Terror Tales #1 (May 1952) leads off with Bailey's cover gallery of the kind of creepy characters you'll meet inside when the Mummy reveals his "blood-chilling secrets...." The first story, "Ghost Hounds of Trelawney," features art by another important contributor to Fawcett horror, Bob Powell. It's bravura stuff—about an old feud between two Scottish landholders—from the giant face with mad dogs reflected in the pupils shown in the splash panel to the final confrontation between the two ghosts and their hellish hounds.

Next up is "The Nameless Horror" with Bailey doing a bold job on an eerie tale of a mysterious white ape whom jungle natives worship as a god with magic powers—powers that end up haunting the American hunter who captures it.

Moldoff wraps things up with a ghost story wherein the otherworldly occupants of a graveyard choose their new caretaker. It's professional if predictable and respectably rounds out an auspicious first issue. One month later Fawcett premiered two more horror mags: *Strange Suspense Stories* and *Unknown World*.

Beware! Terror Tales #2 (July 1952) features the well-wound host issuing his signature warning not just to the treasure-hunters on the cover but to potential readers as well: "Beware!" There's a mountain to climb in the first yarn, the previously unscaled Mt. Olympiad. A group of four climbers starts up, but one of them vows that he alone will reach the summit. Yet each time he murders one of his comrades another trail of red footprints appears—ahead of him! Again, Bob Powell delivered the graphic goods in his tense telling of this ice-cold tale.



Beware! Terror Tales #1 (May 52), excellent design and a compelling group of ghoulish faces help make this first glimpse of Bernard Bailey's "Mummy" an auspicious debut

"The Devil's Creation" deals with a horror writer in the midst of a six-novel series about a sadistic monster called "the Lunk." But when he tries to kill the Lunk at the end of book four the character comes alive to defend himself. It's pretty satisfying, although hardly surprising, but does score a bonus point for a neat little twist at the end.

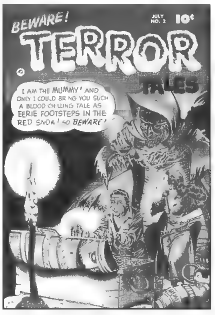
"The Slaying of Joshua Sprague" shows a witch hunt in old New England, and when the black magician is captured by the mob he's put to death by driving an iron spike through his head. Yow! Like most Fawcett horror books, these were packaged with three stories each, resulting in more convoluted narratives than most of the competition—which usually offered four or five stories each issue.

In *Beware! Terror Tales* #3 (Sep 1952) the Mummy is in fine form, hosting three first-rate fantasies. Moldoff illustrated "The Dry Doom," telling the story of a no-good gold-miner who lets a partner perish in the burning desert sands. As expected—the murderer ends up mighty thirsty himself. The "biter-bitten" plot is simple but done to a turn and Shelly's art shines.

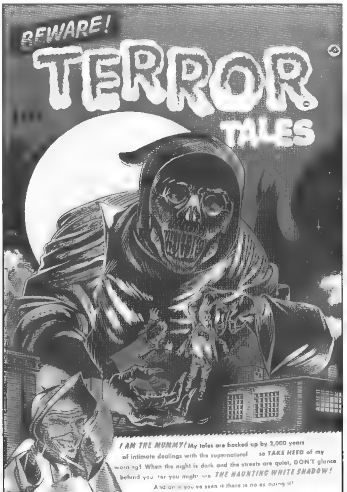
Bob McCarty drew "The Haunting White Shadow" in his emphatic style that was another of Fawcett's horror highlights. A couple of robbers crack a safe, then kill the night watchman who catches them in mid-crime. Of course, it turns out not to have been a great idea to bomp him on the head with the statue of Lady Justice sitting on a desk by the safe. She hounds the two hoods till their sanity snaps—perhaps most entertainingly in the scene where the dead watchman's face stares out at them from each bill of their heisted horde of greenbacks.

"Death's Round Trip" is a superb finale, the tale of a scientist who plans to "die" in his laboratory then get revived 15 minutes later by his "mechanical heart-pump." Of course, he hopes to bring back secrets from "the other side," but it isn't that easy. First his soul rises from his body then he finds himself on a ferry across the "River Styx." The herders of the dead laugh at his claims that he is but a visitor in their realm, and as grim events progress he begins to doubt himself. The race back to the ferry is capped by the inevitable reversal as death plays its trump card.

Beware! Terror Tales continued in this high style through an eight-issue run, but as Fawcett was withdrawing from the comic book business the title expired despite being a quality product. And the Comics Code that came along a year or so after its demise guaranteed that there would be no revival, by banning the word "Terror" from comic book titles.


BEWARE!
TERROR
TALES
JULY NO. 2 10¢
I AM THE MUMMY! AND ONLY I COULD BE SO YOU SUCH A BLOOD CHILLING TALE AS EERIE FOOTSTEPS IN THE RED SNOW! NO BEWARE!

Beware! Terror Tales #2 (July 52), an ancient chest holds terror as well as treasure for those consumed by greed, and the Mummy is on hand to tell us about it on this lurid Bailey cover


BEWARE!
TERROR
TALES
I AM THE MUMMY! My tales are backed up by 3,000 years of intimate dealings with the supernatural ... so TAKE HEED of my warning! When the night is dark and the streets are quiet, DON'T glance behind you for you might see THE HAUNTING WHITE SHADOW!

Beware! Terror Tales #3 (Sep 52), "When the night is dark and the streets are quiet, DON'T glance behind you, for you might see 'The Haunting White Shadow'"—this stern warning from the Mummy completes an effective Bailey cover

Still Worthy

But No Longer Financially Worthwhile

How Collectors Have Never Fully Appreciated Prince Valiant

by Michelle Nolan

If you had been buying scarce, high-demand comic books during the dawn of fandom in the 1960s, what would have been your worst financial investment?

Notice I said "financial"—not "artistic" or "cultural."

The early 21st century answer would have boggled the minds of the dozens of 1960s collectors who absolutely hungered to own a copy of *Feature Book* #26 from 1941. That is, had collectors of that era but known.

During the 1960s and even well into the '70s, *Feature Book* #26—the only Golden Age comic book completely devoted to Prince Valiant—was close to being the Holy Grail of comic collecting. Nearly as many collectors sought out this comic as they did *Action* #1 or *Detective* #27. And as for *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 or *Fantastic Four* #1—in 1965, many, if not most, collectors wouldn't have traded ten of those historic Marvels for one *Feature Book* #26.

That's right, believe it or not, *Feature Book* #26—the only comic book with an original Hal Foster cover!—has become a 21st century money loser. A "loser," that is, from the standpoint of anyone who bought a *Feature Book* #26 only as an investment, back in those halcyon days of the 1960s, when Foster was still doing his marvelous *Prince Valiant* Sunday pages, three decades after he began his pet project.

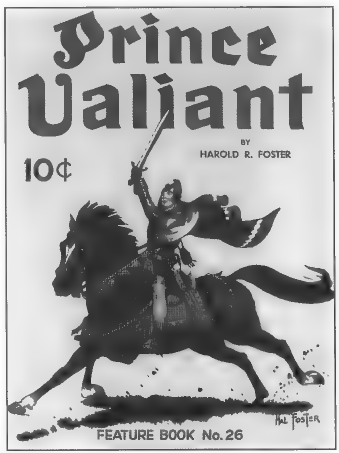
Hard to believe, isn't it? But it's true. Let's look at the reasons.

After Foster pioneered truly fantastic comic strip art in 1931 with *Tarzan*—fantastic in more ways than one—the master artist's epic vision of the Arthurian period began on February 13, 1937, in what eventually became a truly prodigious output of *Prince Valiant* pages.

Nothing like *Prince Valiant* had ever been seen on the Sunday comic pages, which in the 1930s were handsome and huge enough to enhance, rather than detract from, the work of true craftsmen such as Foster and Alex Raymond. (Looking at some of the frustratingly cramped current Sunday pages, especially those in newspapers that have reduced their width, is enough to inspire a unique combination of nostalgia and nausea.)

When the Prince Valiant comic book hit the stands in 1941, as the *pièce de résistance* of the David McKay Company's four-color fling, nothing like it had ever been seen either. Not only was it the first full-color issue in the *Feature Book* series, but it featured 64 pages the like of which had never been seen in comic books.

In 1941, regular publication of 10-cent comic books was only seven years old, and the art in most of them was still crude, if often remarkably energetic and imaginative. In fact, during the years 1934-'40, only 1,506 news-



Feature Book #26 (1941)

stand comic books were published! (Comics historian Dan Stevenson has painstakingly tracked every known issue, providing a complete count.)

The vast majority of 1930s comic books were anthology titles that reprinted newspaper strips. At the beginning of 1941, perhaps the only comic book that had matched or surpassed *Feature Book* #26 was the landmark issue that reprinted for the first time in color Foster's Sunday *Tarzan* pages—*Tarzan Singles Series* #20 from United Features Syndicate in 1940.

Young readers, then, had to be stunned by the quality of these first complete comic books featuring color versions of Foster's Tarzan and Prince Valiant. And what better artist to showcase than Foster?

Remember, too, that comic books starring single characters—be they original or reprinted from newspapers—were still considered special, indeed. In fact, when *Superman* #1 appeared in mid-1939, it represented the first time an original character was given his own comic book!

I can remember hearing older collectors of the 1960s talking reverently about when they first encountered the Prince Valiant *Feature Book* #26 and how impressed they were with it. And, thus, how much they wanted once again to own it.

What also made this comic special so many years after it first appeared is that it was the only complete issue with *Prince Valiant* Sunday reprints ever published. I have no idea why—perhaps *Feature Book* #26 did not sell well, or perhaps there were license complications involved in dealing with either Foster or King Features.

The only other comic book titles featuring Prince Valiant in the Golden or Silver Age were the seven Dell *Four-Color* issues published from June 1954 through May 1958 and containing nice art by Bob Fuje. The first, *Four Color* #567, was one of Dell's first movie adaptations, illustrating the entertaining 1954 Twentieth Century-Fox film starring Robert Wagner (as Val), James Mason (as the Black Knight) and Janet Leigh (as the princess!!) and featuring a wonderful musical score by Franz Waxman.

By the way, the often stuffy *Halliwell's Film Video Guide* gives this film one star (not a bad recommendation), calling it "agreeable historical nonsense for teenagers, admittedly and sometimes hilariously from a comic strip." Leonard Maltin gives it two-and-a-half stars, meaning it's worth seeing if you can suspend your disbelief, even though he calls it a "cardboard costumer."

The only other Golden or Silver Age comic book appearances of Prince Valiant were four Sunday pages reprinted in each issue of McKay's *Ace Comics* #26 (May 1939) through #134 (May 1948), along with *King Comics* #146 and 147. But Ace did little to headline Prince Valiant—I haven't seen all the old Ace covers, but I've never seen a Prince Valiant cover and Ace rarely even mentioned his strip on the cover.

So, how valuable was *Feature Book* #26 in the days before *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* made its debut in 1970?

In 1967, the year before the late Phil Seuling began his never-to-be-forgotten series of New York Comic Conventions, Seuling also was one of the leading comic book dealers in America. He began putting out price lists in 1962 and was one of the first to understand the collectability and value of old comics.

His Summer 1967 list included *Feature Book* #26 for $100, guaranteed to be in "good" condition according to Seuling. In those days before the *Guide*, he sold everything at a "good" condition price and refused to otherwise grade any of his comics. At any rate, *Feature Book* #26, listed in a catalog with more than 100 Golden Age first issues and hundreds of other wonderful vintage comics, was tied with *Captain America* #1 and *All Star* #1 as the most expensive comic books in the catalog!

But in the current *Guide*, *Feature Book* #26 is valued at $75 in "good," $225 in "fine" and $900 in "near mint"—far, far less than what Seuling sold it for 35 years ago! In fact, Seuling's $100 tag for "good" in 1967 is equal to more than $600 now, factoring in inflation. Consider that New Hampshire dealer Jim Payette has a *Feature Book* #26 listed in "fine-plus" for $375 in his current catalog, so Payette's price is much less than Seuling's 1967 tag, in terms of constant dollars.

I'm sure many older collectors recall when $100 for a comic book seemed like an outrageously high price!

At any rate, literally hundreds of comic books listed in Seuling's 1967 catalog are now worth more—many of them much more!—than *Feature Book* #26. In fact, if you had spent $100 on Price Valiant's adventures in 1967, you probably would lose money, in constant dollars, trying to sell it today unless Seuling's copy happened to be what would be considered "near mint."

In 1968, Seuling raised the price of *Feature Book* #26 to $150 and listed it in a special category "For the Super Collector," tied with *Tarzan Single Series* #20 and Raymond's Flash Gordon *Four-Color* #10 as the most expensive comics in the catalog. In 1969, Seuling named Foster as the Guest of Honor at his convention (along with Harvey Kurtzman) and led a standing ovation for the artist when Foster spoke. Foster, then a distinguished 77 years old, was visibly touched.

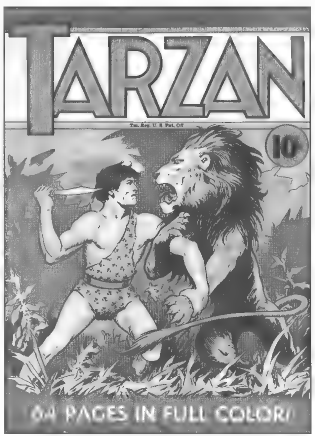
Seuling listed *Feature Book* #26 for $150 in catalogs from 1968 through 1972 and even increased the price to $200 in 1973. That's how much respect Seuling, and most other dealers and collectors, had for the finest of the classic art comics—and the classic artists.

I was one of Phil's assistants at his early conventions. I used my lovingly remembered 1964 Chevy to deliver the displays, including a *Feature Book* #26 and other Foster pieces, to the Statler-Hilton for the 1969 show. I remember ogling that comic book, wishing so very hard that I could afford it so Foster could autograph it!

The beginning of the end for the value of Val was the first *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* in 1970, which listed *Feature Book* #26 at $85 in "good," $100 in "fine" and $125 in "near-mint." Even by 1970, other primo comics had overtaken *Feature Book* #26—*Action* #1 was $200, $250 and $300 and *Detective* #27 was $175, $225 and $275. *Fantastic Four* #1 was $30 in "near-mint" and *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 was $16 in "near-mint."

The implications are obvious!

By 1983, when *Feature Book* was a paltry $100, $260 and $420, *Action* #1 was $2,300, $6,800 and $14,000 and *Detective* #27 was $1,200, $3,600 and $7,800 in *The Guide*'s 13th edition. Even only in "good," *Fantastic Four* #1 was $175 and *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 was $110—both already more valuable than Val!



Single Series #20 (1940), cover art by Paul Berdanier, interior art by Foster.

Today, *The Guide* lists hundreds, if not thousands, of comics worth more than *Feature Book* #26. In fact, it has a list of 100 comic books worth at least $10,000 in "near-mint"—while Prince Valiant remains in the low-rent tent at $900.

It's interesting to note, however, that Prince Valiant is the only adventure character from the Golden Age of the Sunday Page who still survives to this day.

Ten years after *Prince Valiant* debuted, cartoonist and historian Colton Waugh paid a fitting tribute in the pages of *The Comics* (1947, a ground-breaking survey): "It is much more than a comic strip—and perhaps more truthfully, we should say that the comic medium has been stretched by *Prince Valiant* to including almost the ultimate in absorbing and realistic illustration. It would be of high quality among the high-price illustrated children's books, and here it is, all yours for a dime."

Waugh also was awed by Foster's skill as a writer. "*Prince Valiant* is well-written, too; and millions of readers were carried far from the bitter, modern world as they watched Val becoming one of King Arthur's Knights, meeting and falling in love with and marrying a yellow-haired maiden: fighting and laughing and singing his way through desperate difficulties by land and on the swaying old robber-bearing sea. Absorbed in rereading the story, this author had to force himself out of it to come back to business and ask himself, just what place this strip has in the story of comics."

Waugh also liked the fact that, as he put it, "Val is not sentimentalized—he is stiff-necked, arrogant, ruthless—in addition to that feature of utter courage that makes him such a hero."

But by 1972, no less a comics historian than the prolific Ron Goulart—who has written more books about comics than anyone—had a different take on Val.

In his comprehensive, informative book on comic strips in the thirties, *The Adventurous Decade* (1972), Goulart paid loving tribute to Foster's wonderful work on *Tarzan*. Then Goulart devoted all of one paragraph to *Prince Valiant*, ending it in this classic fashion: "...The early *Prince Valiant* pages—it began on February 13, 1937—had some of the spirit of Foster's *Tarzan*. There is already a stiffness, though, a tendency to strike poses. Crowd scenes look like tableaus. Then there is Val himself, looking more like Tyrone Power in drag than a heroic figure. So much for *Prince Valiant*."

Hmmmm... "Tyrone Power in drag," and a bad investment, to boot!

We'll leave you with one more money mystery...would you believe that Prince Valiant's first appearance in comic books, in *Ace* #26 from May 1939, is now valued at more than *Feature Book* #26? That's right—that admittedly scarce *Ace* issue catalogs at $95 in "good."

Some heroes just get no respect!

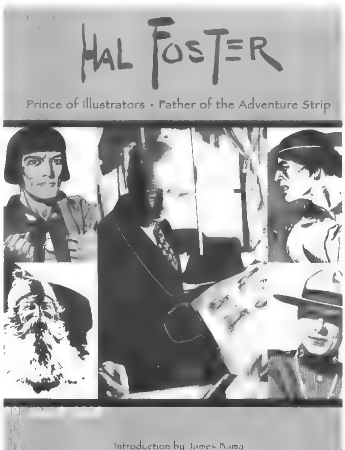
Hal Foster: Noblesse Oblige in the Funnies

by Robert R. Barrett

It is really not kosher for a reviewer who is intimately associated with a book to write a review of that book. A reviewer should be objective and not predisposed to either like or dislike a book that he plans to review. I had the privilege of working with Brian Kane on his biography of Hal Foster; at least on that chapter devoted to Foster's Tarzan years, and I also furnished him with some of the art that is featured. And I am an unmitigated fan of Hal Foster's work! Having said that, I feel obligated to review Brian's book with as much unbiased objectivity as I can muster.

I asked myself if *Comic Book Marketplace* is the right publication for a review of the life and works of Hal Foster. After all, the title seems to state that it is a publication catering to those who, at least before Russ Cochran took on the reins of editorship, enjoy nothing but "comic books." Some of the readership, under the new editor, have even complained about Russ' intent to feature articles dealing with the classic newspaper strips—writing that "their time is waaay over." Certainly, it would seem, the day of the adventure strip is all but over. Yet there also seems to be a market for reprint books of the old, classic newspaper strips, and those who collect the original art. I hope Russ will continue to devote some pages of this publication to those venerable old strips and their creators.

At one time the newspaper comics enjoyed remarkable popularity in our country. So popular, in fact, that many of them were published full page; this before the 1950s when the newspapers decided that they needed to print more comics on the limited pages of their comics sections, or wanted more advertising space—thus leading to today's practice of reducing, cropping, dropping tiers, in order to cram the funnies on the pages like sardines in a tin.



Because of the reverence with which the funnies were once held, it is unusual that more biographies of this wonderful medium's creators have not been written. While there may be more than I am aware of, only Winsor McKay, creator of *Little Nemo*, and George Herriman, creator of *Krazy Kat*, come readily to mind. A planned biography of Alex Raymond was scheduled to be published by Kitchen Sink before their untimely demise, and one on Milton Caniff has been written [by *CBM*'s R. C. Harvey], but the manuscript is so voluminous that it seems to scare potential publishers off.

Now Brian Kane has written the illustrated biography of Hal Foster and it will prove to be the definitive book on Foster. Kane became so caught up in putting the book together, that he wasn't satisfied to merely write it, he also had to gather all of the art used in the book, and design it too. And while the design credit is divided between Meredith Pratt and Kane, the book's initial design was done by Brian—with Meredith going over the manuscript and "tweaking" Brian's designed pages. And the design is excellent; Foster himself could hardly have done better.

The editing could have been a bit more judicious; there are a few typos and several instances in which the word "loose" was used for "lose." But considering that most books published by the major book publishers today are replete with errors—Brian's book contains few.

Since I am basically an Edgar Rice Burroughs fan, I'd like to make some comments about the chapter dealing with Foster's drawing of the daily adaptation of Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* and *Tarzan* Sunday page. There are at least two misconceptions repeated in this chapter: that Foster devised the technique of

[continued on page 66]

Hal Foster In The Spotlight

by Dave Winiewicz © 2001

Brian Kane's handsome new volume, *Hal Foster: Prince of Illustrators—Father of the Adventure Strip*, is both fascinating in its diverse contents and definitive in its detailed examination of the life and times of Hal Foster. Scholars will appreciate the wealth of personal details and anecdotes about Foster's private life and thoughts, while art fans and collectors will salivate over the many rare and tasty reproductions presented throughout the book. This is an important book and everyone should rush to place a copy in their personal library.

The book contains 15 chapters, a central color gallery, and a final section of tributes from noted artists. James Bama and Bob Lubbers contribute introductory essays. The first four chapters document the early life of Foster in Canada, his family, sporting interests, and meeting his future wife, Helen. Rare photos abound and there is reproduced a special section of lively camping sketches from trips made with his good friend, Eric Bergman. Chapter five begins a look at how Foster got the *Tarzan* daily strip and subsequently took over the Sunday strips from Rex Maxon (whose lackluster art was a continuing source of aggravation to Edgar Rice Burroughs). There is a great photo of Foster at his drawing table from 1933 with an early *Tarzan* Sunday original on his board. This photo and the startling appearance of a previously unseen and unknown Tarzan color specialty piece are worth the price of the book alone. Brian Kane has unearthed many such jewels for our delectation. Subsequent chapters examine the birth of the *Prince Valiant* strip, Foster's philosophy of art and storytelling (a fascinating look into his creative process where story quality is deemed just as important as the art), and a consideration of how Foster was influenced by the likes of Howard Pyle and J.C. Leyendecker. This leads into a look at how Foster had a major influence on artists like Frazetta, Kirby, Murphy Anderson, Jerry Siegel (who fashioned Superman in the image of Tarzan) and Bob Kane. [See my essay on "Frazetta and Foster" in this issue of *CBM* for some careful clarifications of this issue.] The book holds artistic surprises with each turn of the page. We see numerous images of Tarzan, Prince Valiant, a great assortment of illustrated Christmas cards, loads of advertising art, Canadian mountie pictures, assorted watercolors (including some previously unseen whimsical fairy tale art) and loads of specialty pieces done for National Cartoonist's Society gatherings. There is even a reproduction of the only known *Prince Valiant* DAILY! There is a chapter devoted to artists who helped Foster on the *Valiant* strip. The later chapters deal

[continued on page 68]

The Making of HAL FOSTER

Prince of Illustrators -- Father of the Adventure Strip

by Brian M. Kane

Harold Rudolf Foster was one of the three great adventure strip illustrators of the twentieth century. Foster, along with Milton Caniff and Alex Raymond, formed what can only be called "The Great Triumvirate." Their talent was unparalleled in its day and their highly imaginative, beautifully illustrated stories ranged the entire gamut of the past (*Prince Valiant*), the present (*Terry and the Pirates* and *Steve Canyon*), and the future (*Flash Gordon*), but it was Foster who stood at the pinnacle of that triumvirate. Writing the first comprehensive biography on this semi-reclusive 89-year-old icon who has been dead for over twenty years was challenging, rewarding, enlightening, and a lot of fun.

While I like and admire Foster's work, and count him as one of my formative influences, I never expected to author his biography. During the fall of 2000, I called Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr. of Bud Plant Illustrated Books to ask him about a book that was listed in his catalogue. In addition to running the rare books venue, Jim has been faithfully producing short, detailed artist's biographies on the Bud Plant web site over the past few years. Casually, I suggested he do Foster next since Fantagraphics Books was nearing the end of their 40-volume reprint of all of Hal's *Prince Valiant* strips. Jim explained how busy he was with the mail order business and how he was thinking of cutting back on the biographies. Then he promptly knocked me on my butt by asking me if I would write the Foster piece. I immediately said "yes."

After a few weeks of reading and re-reading articles I realized how truly interesting Foster's life was and how little was written about him. My four major sources were 1) *Near Mint* #19, which reprinted Clive Howard's 1949 article from *Pageant* magazine, 2) Fred Schreiber's 1969 interview from *Nemo* #9, October 1984, 3) Katherine Collins' (Arn Saba's) 1979 interview that appeared in *The Toronto Star*'s "Canadian Weekend" December 8, 1979, supplement (and was later reprinted in *The Comics Journal* #102, September 1985), and 4) the NBM color Tarzan volumes. What amazed me most about the interviews and articles, which spanned most of Foster's career, was how similar his answers were—some of them word-for-word. It was then that I decided to dig a little deeper and try to find out what he wasn't saying and how a catalogue artist from Winnipeg became the Father of the Adventure Strip.

New
water trails
open to you
THERE'S a bit of the pioneer spirit in all of us, a desire to discover . . . to go where primeval nature is undisturbed . . . where the ever-changing vista of the Great Out-of-doors leads through mile after mile of unsettled country and winding waterways
Today—with a Johnson Motor astern of any good boat—you may seek the real adventure that carries you far from summer hotels and French chefs. You may cruise through chain after chain of charming water regions—fishing, hunting, camping as your fancy dictates
And, as you glide along in wondering contemplation of the birds, the trees, the whole outdoors—you realize you're having the most wonderful vacation you've ever had.
This summer know the joy of a Johnson—the outboard motor that has established a new standard of water-motoring performance. Ask any Johnson owner. Better still—ask any Johnson dealer to let you take one for trial. If you do not like it—don't keep it.
JOHNSON MOTOR COMPANY, 136 Sample Street
South Bend, Indiana
NEW
WORLD'S RECORD
29.768 M. P. H.
Since 1925 when a world's record of 16.68 m. p. h. was made Johnson has continued making new records and breaking them as fast as established
Twice this year has Johnson set a new world's record—and broken it
The following telegram from the president of the Mississippi Valley Power Boat Association tells of Johnson's newest record
Houston Texas
April 26th, 1927
J. W. Conover with a Johnson Big Twin covers six mile course in twelve minutes eighteen seconds stop average speed 29.768 m. p. h. stands as official world's record made Sunday April 24th at Battle Ground Houston Texas
Signed—Bruce Fall
Pres. M. V. P. B. A.
4 models of Johnson Motors offer speeds of 8, 13, 28 and 29 m. p. h. respectively, depending upon boat used. They are the lightest weight outboard motors per horse power
25 lb. Light Single $115
37 lb. Light Twin $140
45 lb. Standard Twin $195
85 lb. Big Twin $210
Sold by leading sport goods, hardware and marine supply dealers
COUPON
Mail this coupon in 1-10 cent or stamps for your copy of the "Guide to Watering Travels" 1927 edition. Gives most up charted water trips through 32 states
JOHNSON MOTOR CO., 136 Sample St.
South Bend, Indiana
Name
Address
City State
(Catalogue sent free upon request)
WORLD'S LARGEST MANUFACTURER OF OUTBOARD MOTORS
Johnson
Outboard Motors

*This ad for Johnson Outboard Motors (*Saturday Evening Post, *June 11, 1927) is an example of the work Foster did in Chicago while at the Palenske-Young Studio. Foster's signature is hidden in the grass at the base of the foreground tree. Like the other pieces of art and photos in this article, this one was uncovered after the book went to press.*

My next important stop was the Cartoon Research Library at Ohio State University. The Library's curator, Lucy Caswell and her associate, Dennis Toth were both extremely helpful in locating old periodicals on Foster and his work. They also had Bob Bindig's scrapbooks on all the comic strips and their creators. These were well-maintained, huge volumes (39 in all) filled with copies of articles from various periodicals. The information gleaned from these helped fill in some of the gaps from 1928 to the present, but for each answer I'd get two or three new questions would scratch their way to the surface. For example, one source stated that Hal left school at 13 while another listed it at 18—which was correct? It wouldn't be until months later that I would realize it was probably King Features that "aged" Hal in order to gain the strip respectability. After all, how could a man with only a sixth grade education produce such an intelligent, well-researched, witty, educational, and beautifully illustrated strip without at least a high school diploma? Rather than honor Hal for his outstanding accomplishments and the depth of his conviction to educate himself, someone decided to rewrite history. For me it was important to cut through the fabrications surrounding Foster not because I wanted to demythologize him but because the truth was so much more admirable.

Hal Foster had two sons, Edward and Arthur, and it was Arthur who went on to do backgrounds on *Prince Valiant* and teach at both The Art Student's League in New York and at Pratt Institute. It puzzled me that Arthur didn't take over the strip from his father so I was curious to find out why. Since the League was my only solid lead I started there. After talking with Stephanie Cassidy at the League I learned that Arthur unfortunately had died in 1996. She did, however, put me in touch with Arthur's long-time friend and the man who succeeded him as President of the League, Geoffrey K. Mawby. Geoffrey had been a former Vice President of Scribners' Sons and while there was responsible for reprinting the N.C. Wyeth illustrated novels. Geoffrey was a wealth of information and eventually I learned that Hal's first son, Edward, had died in 1985, leaving no children; however, Arthur's son, Douglas, was still alive. I'd found Hal's family—or so I thought.

In December 2000, after trying unsuccessfully for weeks to contact Douglas Foster by phone I gave up and began writing Hal's biography for the web page.

Hal Foster—Master of the Romantic

In the 1920s when Hal Foster began accepting commissions for commercial illustrations, advertising was in the midst of a sweeping transformation. More than forty years prior to Marshall McLuhan's claim that advertising was "the greatest art form of the twentieth century," executives at the major agencies were working hard to elevate the reputation of their vocation. Having shaken the stigma of P.T. Barnum and the seedy purveyors of patent medicines, the industry was enjoying newfound prestige. And it wasn't long before a profession usually perceived as peopled by snake-oil salesmen was considered a respectable career path for university graduates. In 1924, the Harvard Business School acknowledged this newfound prestige by establishing The Harvard Awards for excellence in advertising.

The rising status of the profession affected everyone in the industry. Copywriting was declared to be among the most difficult literary forms by none other than Aldous Huxley. Earnest Elmo Calkins of Calkins and Holden, proclaimed advertising art "real art." The prominent agency N.W. Ayer and Sons agreed with Calkins and for many years maintained an elegant art gallery dedicated to the exhibition of advertising illustrations.

Into this heady climate, fueled by the economic boom of the Roaring Twenties, Foster brought his youthful energy and prodigious talent. The work of illustrators was in great demand as color photography was not yet practical, and as Calkins once commented, "A picture can say things that no advertiser could say in words and keep his self respect."

Foster managed to say a lot with pictures that were both expert and cleverly contrived to sell a product. His illustrations of Mounties for Northwest Paper subtly implied that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police somehow endorsed the product. A beam of light shining from the heavens in an illustration for the Jahn and Ollier Engraving Company went even further, delicately suggesting an even higher endorsement.

The harsh realities of the Depression years gradually changed the character of advertising illustrations from the romantic to the practical, and Foster, a master of the romantic, had few commissions. Though forced to leave what he considered the more prestigious art of advertising to draw a newspaper comic strip, Foster raised that maligned art form to new heights and in the process invented a magnificent outlet for his unique vision.

—Alice A. Carter

Professor in the School of Art and Design, San Jose State University; author of *The Red Rose Girls* and *The Art of the National Geographic*

The two specialty pieces of Tarzan (below) and Prince Valiant (page 31) are from the collection of Jack Gilbert and appear with his permission.

I was on break between semesters and it was the perfect time to write. Jim wanted three or four pages but before I realized it I had 12. How do you condense a man's 70-year career down to three or four pages? What part of a person's life can be deemed unimportant? There was Foster's catalogue work, his advertising work, Tarzan and, ultimately, Prince Valiant. I decided to take the easy way out and let Jim edit it.

At the same time I emailed the biography to Jim I also sent it to several friends and associates. Within an hour I received a reply from J. David Spurlock, publisher of Vanguard Productions. He liked what

MY EARLY INTERESTS WERE GOLD PROSPECTING (ACCOMPANIED BY MOSQUITOS!) IN MANITOBA, FUR TRAPPING NEAR MY HOME IN NOVA SCOTIA, BOATING OFF HALIFAX AND EXPLORING NORTHERN RIVERS.

Hal goes native (photo right—circa 1917). As a hunter, trapper, fisherman and guide Foster came in contact with many of the native Canadians. His experiences would inspire Val's voyage to the New World.

he'd read and said, "Too bad this is going on the web. I would have liked to have been able to develop it into a book." My reaction? "Drat!"—or words to that effect. Another half hour passed and I received a reply from Jim Vadeboncoeur: "It's too long. Too bad you can't find another outlet for this, like a magazine or a book publisher. Can you edit it down to three or four pages?" My reaction? "YES!"—and "drat" too, but only because I still had to slice 'n' dice Hal's life for the web page. By the end of January 2001, the web bio was completed and by mid February I'd signed a contract to deliver a biography and art book on Hal Foster to Vanguard by Spring 2002.

It surprised me that a book on Foster had never been done before until I had to deal with the nightmare of obtaining permissions. While getting permission from any one source is fine by itself I had to get them from King Features Syndicate, the Edgar Rice Burroughs Estate, the National Cartoonists Society, the Provincial Archives of Manitoba and a half-dozen others. I also became conscious of the fact that while there are countless sketchbooks, art books, and all-inclusive histories of comic strips, there are very few individual biographies of the creators. There were many biographies on Charles Schultz as well as John Canemaker's wonderful *Winsor McCay—His Life and Art*, *Krazy Kat—The Comic Art of George Herriman* by Patrick McDonnell, Karen O'Connell and Georgia Riley de Haveron, and the recently published *Mort Walker's Private Scrapbook*, but there certainly wasn't the plethora of volumes like

In 1973, I met the great fantasy artist Roy Krenkel at a Fourth of July Comic Art convention in New York. After some prodding he gave me a few art tips: find a tool you're comfortable with, say a pencil, and an artist to study. "Who?" I asked. "Anybody good," replied Krenkel, "except Foster, he's too damn good, you'll never figure out how he does it. I know—I've tried."

There was a book in my high school library titled *A History of the Comic Strip* by Pierre Couperie and Maurice Horn. I discovered the art of Harold Foster in this book in 1969, when I was a high school freshman. The book had an unusual reproduction technique, which gave the comic strip images a very graphic, bold, high-contrast look. The effect was stunning, and most stunning of all was the work of Foster.

After discovering him in this book, I took a closer look at *Prince Valiant* in my local newspaper, and discovered things I hadn't noticed before. Around this time I began taking drawing, particularly in ink, much more seriously, and Foster was the unattainable goal I was striving for. I was already fascinated by the work of Frazetta. I'd never seen anything like it, but then I saw where he got it from—Foster. There were other artists in the field of comics who were working with a similar approach, accurate, realistic drawing with bold use of black areas. Alex Raymond, José Salinas, Wallace Wood, Al Williamson and others, all terrific artists in their own right, but all of them, including Frazetta, owe an enormous debt to Hal Foster. He led the way. Even outside of comics, among the legion of superb illustrators, few had the power of Foster, N.C. Wyeth being one of those few.

So what is it about his work? How did he do it? The only thing I can come up with is his early, outdoor life, which is fairly unique among artists. Like with Wyeth, the world Foster created actually functioned. The swords he drew had weight, the rafts his characters built looked like they'd hold together but if they fell apart there was a reason. When his Tarzan shot an arrow while climbing a tree, Foster would put in little details that convinced you that it could really be done. Why? How? Foster in all likelihood HAD shot an arrow from a tree, so he knew what it took!

But how did he figure out how to DRAW it so powerfully, realistically, and naturally? I'm with Roy there; I can't figure it out either, but what a source of inspiration.

—Thomas Yeates
illustrator

While this photo may not show Hal with a bow and arrow as Thomas Yeates conjectured, he certainly did do some shooting from up in trees. Foster always had his camera ready and many of his photos of his travels found their way into the book.

Foster's best friend, Eric Bergman (photo below), went on many hunting and fishing trips with Hal into the wilds of Manitoba. The book contains 26 cartoons (like the one below) from 1914-1920 of these adventures, and another eight cartoons Hal did while on his 1915 honeymoon with Helen. Eric is standing far left, Hal is in the middle and the third man is believed to be Jack Schaflein, a friend and fellow artist at Brigdens Ltd.

those on Rockwell, Wyeth, Parrish, Cornwell or other "true" illustrators.* In fact, since the introduction of The Society of Illustrators' Hall of Fame in 1958, Rube Goldberg, Noel Sickles and Winsor McCay have been the only "cartoonist" illustrators inducted. It was out of this realization that *Hal Foster: Prince of Illustrators—Father of the Adventure Strip* was created in order to showcase Foster's seldom-seen illustrative work in addition to his more hard-to-find Tarzan and Prince Valiant art.

Now it became imperative for me to contact Douglas Foster but no matter what time of day or night I called there was never any answer. Through Geoffrey Mawby I located Arthur Foster's friend and executrix, Kay Lind, and obtained the phone number of Douglas' daughter, Marie. After calling her I learned that Douglas had passed away unexpectedly within the past year. Marie remembered Hal. He was the kindly old great grandfather who would draw horses for her on

** The 1,958-page unpublished manuscript "Meanwhile· The Life and Art of Milton Caniff" by Robert C. Harvey is available for viewing at The Ohio State University's Cartoon Research Library.*

Most artists own at least one or two volumes of the works of Hal Foster. The books are standard issue for the studio. Sitting high on the shelves, they are constant reminders of the noble legacy which cartoonists and illustrators are heir to. I would look at these books from time to time with a quiet reverence for Mr. Foster. "You looked but you did not see, Watson!" is a remark Sherlock Holmes was fond of making. He might have directed that remark toward me.

A short time ago, a friend lent me several *Prince Valiant* panels carefully cut from the papers of the '40s and '50s. The printed illustrations had a graphic beauty rivaling that of many lithographic posters from the early 20th century. All of the high-tech modern print and color methods used today can't equal the level of craftsmanship displayed in this work printed long ago. This was a revelation to me and it lead to my re-examination of Foster's art, viewing it in an entirely different light.

I humbly point this out because there may be others who could benefit from a closer study; to appreciate what his longtime admirers have already taken to heart. Many of Foster's fans are professionals with keen insights regarding his artwork. For me, the artist's ability to portray the quiet moments, action and spectacle not withstanding, are of particular interest. A toddler climbing a chair, a man twirling his mustache, a humorous smirk or a woman's scornful expression are much more difficult to convey than a battle scene. They require restraint, taste and a delicate touch. His figures are always handled with dignity and his backdrops of bucolic forests or ocean waves are finished with the same attention to detail.

Hal Foster's art achieves this with a passion and precision worthy to be held in the highest esteem by the cartoonist, illustrator and fine artist alike.

—Gary Gianni
illustrator

When I was a brash college student I called Hal Foster up, told him that I was a fan of his and asked if I could come to visit. I can now appreciate what an imposition that must have been, given the long hours he put in every week creating the *Prince Valiant* strip, but he was unfailingly kind and made me feel welcome in his home.

There were a few obstacles in the way of casual visitors: an hour train ride followed by a long, ruinously expensive drive in a taxi. I dimly remember a fine house set amid landscaped grounds. Hal Foster was alone when I arrived, except for the poodle, which kept him company while he drew. We talked for more than an hour. He mentioned that he always drew the sea himself, inking every wave and highlight, because he had never had an assistant who could draw the sea. He did have an assistant to ink some backgrounds, but he wrote and penciled the entire page and inked all the human figures.

We talked about books—he had a large library. He mentioned enjoying T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* well enough to steal from, and I think he also mentioned liking J.R.R. Tolkein's *The Lord of the Rings*. And Tolkein was a Prince Valiant fan, I believe. But he said that most of his reading was non-fiction, especially history and travel books.

As I was leaving, I said that I thought *Prince Valiant* was the greatest comic strip of all time. With a twinkle in his eye, he said that there were two people in the room who were of that opinion.

—Frederick Norwood
publisher, *Prince Valiant, The American Epic*

Hal Foster's contribution to American Comics cannot be appreciated without accepting his storytelling superiority. His fundamental research and organizational skills, along with his accomplishment of forty years of unparalleled visual excellence, all combine to place him amongst the premier artists and storytellers of the genre.

—Jack Gilbert
art collector and critic

Stoveo Press in Winnepeg produced Western Home Monthly, *which appears in the photo above (circa 1912). There are no physical records connecting Hal (far right) to Stoveo except for a series of photos like this one from the family photo album. It is still a mystery as to the identities of the two men in the photo with Hal.*

restaurant napkins. Marie was more than willing to help and sent me a box of old photos and a few cartoons dating back to 1914. Some of the photos were labeled—most were not. There were large gaps in the family record which had to be filled so I began with Hal's unedited obituary and a startling realization.

I'd never read Hal's full obituary before. Most of the ones that I had read in the past were heavily edited but this contained everything. When Hal died in 1982, he was survived by Helen, his sons Edward and Arthur and five grandchildren. Five? But Arthur had only two children, Douglas and Suzanne who had died tragically on December 23, 1973, after accidentally contracting viral hepatitis at the medical facility where she worked. Was this a typo? If Edward didn't have any children as I was told then who were the other four grandchildren? I asked Marie if her father had any cousins but she told me he never mentioned any. Finally a break came with Kay Lind. Arthur had never mentioned having any

IN '21, I DECIDED TO STICK WITH ART, BICYCLED 1000 MILES TO CHICAGO'S ART INSTITUTE. MY SERIOUS PAINTING RECEIVED THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE FROM ME, MILD APPROBATION FROM THE PUBLIC.

Apart from *Prince Valiant*'s longevity and consistency, there is the inescapable influence of Hal Foster upon the comic strip and comic book fields. To hear the pioneers of the comic book field's Golden Age tell it there were no other influences apart from Foster, Raymond and Caniff. An influence which—in Hal Foster's case—was also a guiding light to such latter-day titans as Frank Frazetta and Wally Wood who, in turn, became guiding lights to subsequent generations of comics creators.

In the comic book field I have built a small but rather secure beachhead as a literary and artistic parodist. It's an eccentric, marginalized ability. To imitate accurately you have to know "how it is done" and in examining "how it is done" what you discover many times is how much of it is "real" and how much of it is "faked." This is particularly true of cartooning styles. A certain amount of cartooning, particularly adventure-strip cartooning, consists of actual drawing ability and hard work. A certain amount of cartooning is, as Robert Crumb assures us, "only lines on paper, folks"—mere pen lines and brush strokes, which, with many years of practice, can create the illusion of realism. Alex Raymond, both on *Flash Gordon* and *Rip Kirby*, was a good example of this. He had a substantial background in illustration, a good knowledge of anatomy and composition and knew how to render light and shadow in pen and ink. But, as a certain point in any given Raymond panel, the drawing stopped and technique took over—whippy-whippy pen lines and precious brush strokes. Brilliant, and achingly beautiful, but whippy-whippy pen lines and precious brush strokes nonetheless.

In 1979, I choose to do a parody of *Prince Valiant* in *Cerebus*. I thought that Hal Foster was in the same category and I set out to "crack" his style: to discover where in his work the drawing stopped and the technique took over.

The drawing didn't stop.

Everything in a Hal Foster panel is authentic drawing, from the highlights on Val's hair to the precise folds in his tunic, from the exact width and configuration of the shadow cast by those folds both inside those folds and outside those folds. Precise. Exact. Here is the composition of the panel, says Foster. Here is the precise slope of the shoulder when most of the weight is on the right foot, says Foster. Here is where the shadow which defines that shoulder begins, says Foster. Here, says Foster, is where the shadow which defines that shoulder ends. Not one ten-thousandth of an inch to the right and not one ten-thousandth of an inch to the left. No, HERE, says Foster. And Foster is right. I know because, in trying to pencil and ink my parody of *Prince Valiant*, unless everything was precisely where it was supposed to be—from the exact width of the eyebrows, the exact shape and contour of the shadow under the nose, to the geometric precision of the delicate "feathers" descending in a perfect parabolic curve along the brush stroke which defined the outside of the cheek —it didn't look remotely like Val. And, laboring as I did: sweating bullets and actually, actually, ACTUALLY drawing each of my Hal Foster parody panels, the best I could hope for, I discovered, was a character who looked…remotely…like Prince Valiant. Less remotely in some panels than in others but, still, "remotely" was as close as I got.

In the comic strip field, that level of precision (I feel safe in saying) existed—and has only existed—in the work which Hal Foster did on *Prince Valiant*.

The fact that, so far as I know, Foster himself never made a point of this, never trumpeted his precision nor lorded it over his adventure-strip contemporaries who all—ALL—substituted technique for actual drawing on a regular basis, strikes me as the mark of a true gentleman and a true Artist. He must have—MUST HAVE—known that he was the best pure artist in the field, and by a very wide margin. And still he maintained, publicly, a high and life-long standard of graciousness and humility.

We shall, I am sure, not see his like again.

—Dave Sim
illustrator

nieces or nephews but after looking through some of Arthur's remaining papers she found a scrap with Edward's name on it and a line leading to four names: Errol Edward, Robert James, Lucy Ann, and Mary Margaret—it had to be a family tree! They had to be the missing four grandchildren but were any of them still alive and where did they live?

While Hal denied that the sequence of Val fighting the Huns was representational of the American involvement in World War II, he did produce this political cartoon of Val knocking down Hitler who is dressed as a Hun.

Details of how I located Hal's grandchildren are unimportant and, frankly, boring, but within one week I was on the phone talking with Edward's son, Robert James Foster. My hunch had paid off because the scrap of paper Kay had found actually was a rudimentary family tree. None of the four had heard that Douglas had died and they were all surprised that Marie didn't know she had a whole extended family who knew about her but didn't know where she lived. As far as anyone knows Edward and Arthur never had a fight which drove them apart. Perhaps it was the sense of loss over the deaths of his father, mother, and brother within a three-year period in the early 1980s that caused Arthur to distance himself from Edward's family, but we'll never know. In the end all that mattered was that Marie was reunited with her cousins, and the bonus for me was finding more of Foster's family history than I could have hoped for.

While I was trying to find Foster's family I was also tracking down and contacting other sources. I spoke with Rick Norwood who had self-published three volumes of *Prince Valiant: American Epic*. The volumes are not only the most beautiful and most faithful reprintings of Foster's *Prince Valiant*; they also contained some of his Christmas cards and advertising work. Luckily Rick still had pieces he'd collected over the years that he was never able to publish and was willing to lend them to me. Through NBM I was put in touch with Tarzan historian Robert R. Barrett, who guided me to Edgar Rice Burroughs' grandson Danton Burroughs. Al Williamson connected me with John Cullen Murphy and eventually I was also able to locate George Wildman, R.C. "Bob" Harvey, Bill Crouch, Jr. (who had written some of Prince Valiant's adventures), Jud Hurd, and Katherine Collins (better known as Arn Saba). Everyone had something to contribute to the book and Katherine even gave me free use of her 1979 interview with Hal—including her unedited tapes.

In early March the only thing left to do was travel to Syracuse University to look through Hal's papers. Hal had donated scrapbooks, photo albums, and hundreds of pages of original artwork to the university before he moved to Florida. The trip to Syracuse was a great success and Carolyn Davis, the curator of Special Collections, and her staff afforded me every courtesy so that I could do a tremendous amount of research in an extremely short amount of time. For everything the Foster family had that related to Hal's personal life the university had mirrored in his public life. Now the problem was no

WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

2400 WEST ALAMEDA AVE. • BURBANK, CALIFORNIA • CABLE ADDRESS: DISNEY

October 29, 1952

Mr. Hal Foster
c/o King Features Syndicate
235 East 45th Street
New York 17, N. Y.

Dear Hal Foster:

Usually I have an aversion to crowds, but this is one time when I am glad to be in the midst of a multitude -- the multitude of your admirers and well-wishers who are gathered to honor you as the recipient of the Banshees' Sixth Annual Award of "The Silver Lady".

Each time I read PRINCE VALIANT, which is every Sunday morning, I reflect anew on the beauty of your drawings and the ever-fresh fascination of your stories. Vividly you bring alive a continuing and colorful historical pageant that is a stimulating delight to the eye and mind. PRINCE VALIANT is stirring adventure with wholesome educational overtones.

I would like to extend my warmest congratulations on your award, along with my best wishes for many, many more valorous exploits of PRINCE VALIANT.

Sincerely yours,

Roy O. Disney

Roy O. Disney

ROD:MW

NO AGREEMENT WILL BE BINDING ON THIS CORPORATION UNLESS IN WRITING AND SIGNED BY AN OFFICER

The Fosters: Doris (nee Douglas) Foster, Arthur James Foster, Harold Rudolf Foster, Helen (nee Wells) Foster, Errol Edward Foster, Margaret (nee Lucy) Foster and Edward Lusher Foster. Photo circa 1942.

longer: "How am I going to fill 176 pages?" but "What do I leave out?"

It was while I was going through the family photos and Hal's early cartoons that I noticed a person named "Eric" kept showing up regularly. Then I read a note on the back of a photo, which simply said: "This is me prospecting with Eric Bergman, who later became a well-known Canadian Artist." For most this would be enough but it only made me more curious. Who was Eric Bergman and how "well-known" was he? A quick search of The Library of Congress' catalogue database revealed one book about Eric: *Transformation of Vision: The Works of H. Eric Bergman* by Nancy E. Dillow published in 1983. I borrowed a copy of the book through the interlibrary loan system and there on page eight was a passage I was hoping to find: "During [Eric's] first summer in Winnipeg, he went with Harold Foster, who was to become his closest friend, on a fifteen-day fishing trip through the Lake of the Woods, the Winnipeg and Indian Rivers." The sentence was footnoted and referred to Eric's diary "Memories of a Journey." I immediately knew I had to obtain a copy of that diary, find Nancy Dillow and find Eric's family.

Luck was again with me. The Winnipeg Art Gallery was in the process of readying a show titled "Brigdens of Winnipeg" curated by Mary Jo Hughes. Eric and Hal worked and met at Brigdens Limited, which supplied the mail order catalogues for Eaton's department stores, and the show was designed to showcase artists who had their start in the studio. At the exact moment I called Mary Jo she was editing the entry for Hal Foster—spooky. Mary Jo put me in touch with Nancy E. Dillow and the Bergman family. The family told me that much of

Hal Foster and I

Let me try to explain to you why I draw the way I do. I can lay the blame almost wholly on comic strips, especially those in the big, bright Sunday supplements of my youth. *Flash Gordon*, *Dick Tracy*, *Alley Oop*, *The Phantom* and *Blondie* were always there to greet me each and every Sunday morning of my adolescence. I can't remember a time when I wasn't reading their four-color adventures. It was there on those large newsprint pages that I first made the acquaintance of Hal Foster and his famous offspring, *Prince Valiant*.

Some of my most vivid childhood memories are of that Sunday morning rush of excitement; that opening the comics supplement and tumbling straight away into the world that Prince Valiant brought. Those vivid, living, breathing recreations of a far away medieval world of handsome heroes, their beautiful consorts, cruel villains and dashing adventure blazed their way across my receptive imagination and stayed with me through the long afternoon filled with family and friends. Biting down into a leg of fried chicken I pictured myself in the huge stone castle that was Camelot eating with King Arthur, Sir Gawain, Lancelot and, of course, my good friend, Val. Later, watching football with my dad, I would sit quietly in the family room as it dissolved around me until all I could see was a field of noble knights jousting in the lists.

It's no wonder that Hal Foster and Prince Valiant have been life-long guideposts on my artistic path. Of course I have several bulging bookshelves of Foster material, what self-respecting romantic would-be comic artist wouldn't? But it is those memories, and what they awoke in my heart, that really matter.

It was only later in my life as I struggled to learn something about drawing and storytelling that I found all those other hidden treasures that lay within the artistic world of Prince Valiant: mood, atmosphere and individual characterization, as well as the subtle emotional capabilities of a particular and specific landscape. Each time I return to that burgeoning shelf of Foster material I always walk away having learned something new, having gained some additional insight into another aspect of drawing; but I think that the single most important thing I've learned from Hal Foster's art was how to achieve that all-important potential of complete reader involvement that a sustained sense of graphic reality can bring.

Foster's amazing artistry brought with it a complete conviction to the reader of having actually been "there" within the narrative; of personally experiencing the tale. Think about that for a moment. You as the reader know that you're reading a newspaper BUT you also "know" that you are a part of the tale. Now that is genius. Foster created and sustained that graphic reality year after year, Sunday after Sunday until I was grown and wandering down my own path of artistic endeavor. In all those efforts, including a few attempts at the Prince Valiant myth itself, that has always been one of my artistic goals. I want to put the reader/viewer of my work squarely into my own graphic reality and let them enjoy a really good story. Thank you, Mr. Foster, you're still teaching all of us a few good lessons.

—Charles Vess
illustrator

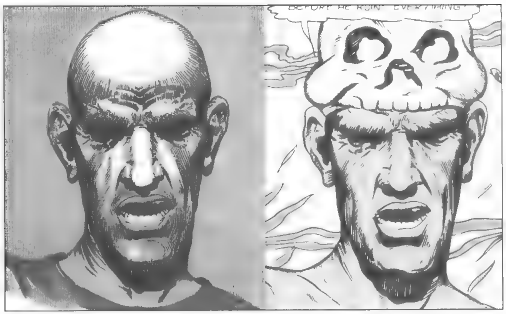
Eric's personal effects, including more cartoons by Hal Foster, had been donated to The Provincial Archives of Manitoba. The family gave me permission to obtain a copy of the diary and then came the words I wasn't expecting: "There might be something that you'll be even more interested in besides the diary." It was an unpublished Tarzan illustration.

While Hal was working on the Tarzan color Sunday strip he was doing work for hire. Since he didn't share a percentage of the returns he seldom did any additional promotional work. Also, Hal never colored any of the original pieces since all coloring was done as guides on Photostats. This piece was different—it was personal. This was an original brush and ink drawing with watercolor washes that he had done for his best friend's son, Eric, Jr., and, as far as I knew, the only one of its kind. I immediately called Tarzan historian, Robert R. Barrett and he confirmed my suspicions—the piece was a unique slice of Foster history and it would appear in color in the book for the first time.

Other unique pieces of Foster's life and work surfaced. There was the only known photograph of Hal sitting behind his drafting table with a page of Tarzan artwork on it, a never before published photo of Edgar Rice Burroughs supplied by the Burroughs Estate, a 1930 Ravinia program cover for the opera *Aida* with a painting that looked as if it was inspired by Edmund Dulac, an unfinished Christmas card, a portrait of Mark Twain, a painting on a drumhead which was once owned by Robert Ripley and purported to have been made from human skin, eight cartoons of Hal and Helen's honeymoon from 1915, birth announcements, the original Western Union telegram from Brad Kelly of King Features Syndicate with the offer for *Prince Valiant*, and Valentine cards meant just for Helen celebrating many years of marriage.

In addition to artwork and photographs, Hal's family history started emerging. Halifax historian and genealogist Alfreda Withrow and Lorraine Slopek of the Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island helped fill in some of the family's back history. Dwight Radford, a genealogist friend of mine from Salt Lake City, supplied some of the Foster family's earliest birth and wedding records. Mary Jo Hughes, Curator of Historical Art at The Winnipeg Art Gallery along with Elizabeth Blight, and Debra Moore of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba helped chronicle Hal's life in Winnipeg. Soon the journal of Hal's great great great grandfather, Leonard Christofer Rudolf, Esq., one of the founders of the great shipbuilding city of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, emerged along with the diary of Adolphus Gates recounting Hal's grandfather Captain Edward Rudolf's horrific experience aboard the doomed ship *The Blake*. Finally, two of Helen's memoirs were uncovered as well as some unpublished writings by Hal concerning aspects of his life. The more I found and read the more real Hal became. I no longer thought he had led a fascinating life but rather the extraordinary one of a sometimes-starving artist filled with determination and persistence.

Hal and Helen on a vacation to Rome in 1957.



Hal Foster's influence on other artists during the "Golden Age of Comics" was widely evident. On the left is a Foster detail from page #174, June 9, 1940. On the right is from All Star Comics *#3, Winter 1940, with art by Shelly Moldoff.*

It was because of stories like this one and others that it became evident just how much Helen contributed to the production of the strip. Without Helen to handle Hal's schedule, the business, the paperwork and other mundane tasks Prince Valiant's Camelot would have eventually crumbled. Hal had used Helen as a model for Aleta—not just in form but in spirit and soul. The strength of character Aleta exhibited was a reflection of the woman Hal would call his "darling frump."

The Fosters shared their stories with me, including one in which Hal snuck a secret message in the strip in an effort to locate his son Arthur who had been missing for several years. The message, which got by King Features' editors, reunited the family and Arthur returned home in order to help Hal with the strip. The reunion was not without its difficulties, especially in a family of strong-willed individuals. Eventually their relationship deteriorated to the extent that they would only communicate to one another through Helen—even though they continued to work on the strip in the same studio. At one point, in the middle of winter after Arthur had given up smoking, the two were working in silence only a few feet from each other when Hal took out his pipe and began puffing away. Arthur got up and opened a window, which made Hal puff all the harder. That resulted in Arthur opening the window wider and the silent sparring match continued until all of the windows of the studio were open, Hal was puffing away like a smokestack, and the two were sitting at their desks in the frigid cold wearing hats, coats and gloves while working diligently at their tasks. At lunch Helen brokered a deal between them whereby Arthur agreed to close all the windows if Hal agreed not to smoke.

By mid-May most of the book had been written and the photos and artwork were either restored or scanned for publication. I completed the entire 192-page layout within two weeks, having added an extra 16 pages due to the sheer volume of material alone. I met the June 1st deadline. After receiving the manuscript David Spurlock decided to bring in a designer to finalize the book and prep it for the printer. We mutually decided on Meredith Pratt. Meredith was graduated from Pratt Institute and had been professionally designing books for over five years, working for companies such as Henry Holt and Co. and North-South Books out of New York. For comic book fans it might be interesting to know that Meredith is the wife of illustrator and graphic novelist George Pratt. Meredith began working on the book immediately and in time I received an email from her that contained the greatest testimonial I could have hoped for:

Hi there, Brian!

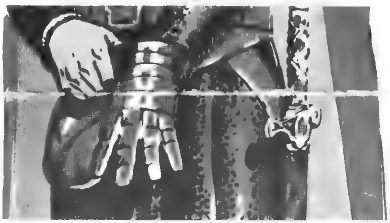
I have greatly enjoyed your book. Let me precede that by saying before seeing this book I had no idea who Hal Foster was, nor his importance in

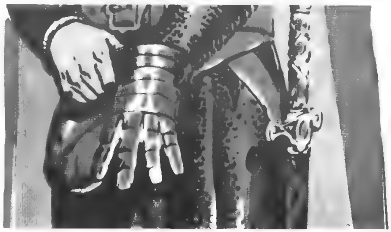
literary/art history. My husband George of course nearly divorced me over this. I am not a comic reader nor am I particularly interested in the medium, but your book has just about converted me. The art is stunning and your research inexhaustible. The industry needs this book!

Upon completion the book consisted of approximately 350 black and white photographs and pieces of artwork, and 50 color illustrations, but I soon found out I wasn't done. David wanted to add an additional 16 pages to the signed and numbered collectors edition. Unfortunately everything I had went into the book with little left over. Then it occurred to me that Hal Foster's 30-strip adaptation of *The Song of Bernadette* hadn't been reprinted since 1978. I immediately called James R. Cavett, the Head of Permissions at King Features Syndicate, to see if it was possible to reprint the strips. We were able to obtain permission for the artwork but not the text as it was held by a separate trust, so, using Hal's artwork as a guide, a Catholic book on saints and a few other sources from the local library, I proceeded to retell the story of Bernadette Soubirous. If I had never expected to pen Hal Foster's biography I certainly never expected to collaborate with him on a story—even if it was a posthumous retelling.

Within five months I had coordinated the efforts of many individuals to help me find people, information, stories and unique pieces of art that would make this the definitive book on Hal Foster.* Even though every effort was made to find as much of Hal's advertising work as possible it is obvious that there are still items that have yet to reveal themselves. If anyone has access to any of these (copies or originals), knows where some of Hal's oil paintings are, or can help name individuals in some of the photographs in the book they can contact me in care of: Brush & Quill Studio, 577 Timberlake Drive, Westerville, OH 43081. While I may have written the book it could not have been done without the help and assistance of many people both in the United States and in Canada and I thank them for their efforts.

Not a single photograph or piece of artwork went into the book without some type of digital restoration by the author who is also a freelance illustrator. The artwork below, which appears in color in the book, is from Kingpin Release *No. 9 (circa 1940) and was found folded in one of Hal's scrapbooks. The four-color piece was painstakingly restored in Photoshop by color matching and replicating the old Ben-Day pattern.*





* *While researching the book a copy of the original film of Hal Foster's appearance on the classic television show* This is Your Life *was found. The film was given to Syracuse University, which had it restored and converted to VHS tape. The show was viewed in its entirety for the first time in almost 50 years at The Mid-Ohio-Con in Columbus, Ohio, November 24 and 25, 2001. The video was well received and showed to two packed crowds.*

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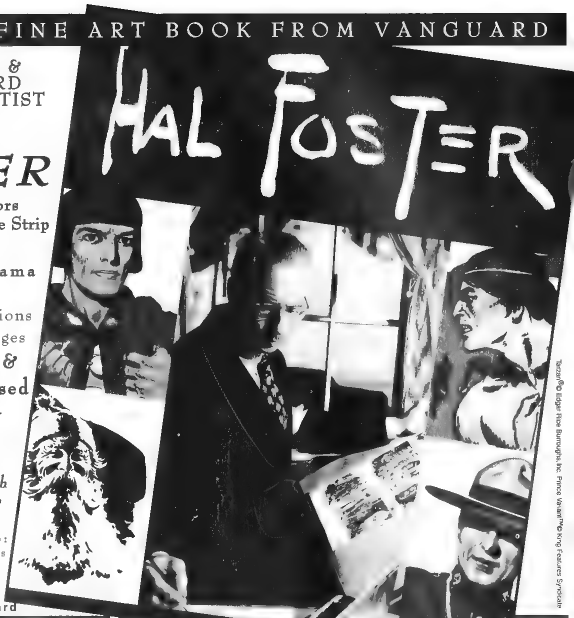

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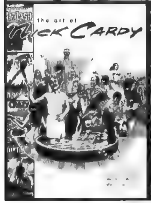

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FRANK CHO, LIBERTY MEADOWS
Splitting from newspapers, together at last

Interview by Bill Baker, conducted in November 2001

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE: For the past few years you've been working on a daily comic strip called *Liberty Meadows*. For those readers who might not be familiar with it, how would you describe it?

Frank Cho: *Liberty Meadows* is a daily newspaper comic strip [that, very soon,] is going to move into the comic book market [exclusively]. It's a cross between Bloom County and Calvin & Hobbes with a dash of Little Annie Fanny thrown in. It's about the life and times in an animal sanctuary. So it's about the relationship between the human caretakers and these crazy animals. That's pretty much the short and long of it.

CBM: Well, I'm not trying to make light of it overmuch, but it really is a very funny, and often very weird strip. I mean, these animals aren't your typical talking "funny animals" or foundlings, are they?

Cho: That's right. These animals have some serious issues. [General laughter] These animals are crazy. They're a crazy bunch of animals, and their crazy caretakers.

CBM: Well, how'd you develop these characters?

Cho: Brandy is my ideal woman. [Laughter] She's actually based on Linda Carter and Bettie Page; mostly Lynda Carter from *Wonder Woman*. I've always liked strong female characters, and Brandy sure fits the mold. Frank the vet and the rest of the animals are loosely based on me and my old college roommates.

CBM: Well, you've recently come to a rather major decision and you're taking a big leap of faith come December, aren't you?

Cho: Right. December 2001, I'm going to end my newspaper run. Right now, *Liberty Meadows* is syndicated as a newspaper comic strip, and reprinted in a comic book format. The newspaper format is the watered-down, censored version, while the comic book is the original, raw, unedited version. So it's the true *Liberty Meadows*. On December 30, which will be the last installment of *Liberty Meadows*, the watered down newspaper version, I'm ending it with a cliff hanger which will be resolved only in the comic book [*Liberty Meadows—The Wedding Album* special] that's coming out sometime in mid-January. I'm trying to bring a lot of newspaper readers into the comic book shops by doing this and also, I want to go out with a bang in the newspaper market.

CBM: Does this signal the end of your reprinting the strip and a move to all-new material, or will you be doing both old and new stuff?

Cho: Well, I've been doing reprints and new material [all along]. A lot of people don't know this, but 25% of all the *Liberty Meadows* comic book is all-new materials.

When I stop [the newspaper run] on December 30 I will have enough material to be reprinted for the next two years. With each issue of *Liberty Meadows* that comes out, I reprint seven weeks at a time; but, out of those seven weeks [worth of strips], 25% are brand new material. So what they read in the comic book version is not the same as the newspaper version.

CBM: OK, so in January 2002, we'll get the *Wedding Album*, which is going to be all new and will resolve the cliff hanger ending.

Cho: And then the comic is going to go back to reprinting *Liberty Meadows* in chronological order [at the point it left the series] before the special *Wedding Album*.

CBM: So what happens when the comic reprints catches up with the *Wedding Album* special a few years down the road? Will you continue the story at that point?

Cho: That is my goal. I want to continue it indefinitely. I have enough new material written to last another year beyond [that point]. It's going to continue, but how much further it's

going to continue, I really don't know. To be honest, I want to take a break, because I've been telling this story for five years now. And with the comic book being published, that's another additional two years. So when I catch up, and all the material is caught up [chronologically] at the end, I will have done this for seven years, roughly. But, yes, I will have new material beyond the newspaper version.

CBM: I know there's essentially three reasons behind your decision to leave the syndicate, and you've already noted one of them earlier: The fact that the comics stuff is really what you wanted people to see, while what the newspapers published was often something that was quite a bit different.

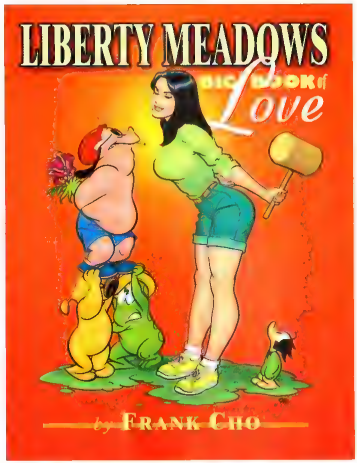
Cho: Right, right. One of the reasons why the comic book version is so different from the newspaper version is pretty simple. A lot of the feature editors found *Liberty Meadows* to be offensive, too risqué for "family newspapers," so they would actually water it down and change stuff without my knowledge. So that's one of the reasons why what you see in the newspaper and what you read in the comic book is different. Another reason why the comic book version is different is that when I got my originals back, many were practically destroyed.

I used to mail the original art directly to my syndicate, and my syndicate would actually alter a lot of the ["offensive"] stuff directly on the original art boards. They would actually white out my dialogue, white out the image; cut and paste or actually redraw some areas. So when I get my originals back, [they were] just a mess. A creator's worst nightmare if you will. And I try to undo the damage as much as I can, but it turns out that it's a lot quicker if I just redraw the damn thing. [Laughter] So, in the process of redrawing it, I would actually add in a lot more stuff. Plus, I would draw extra strips to make the story flow better. Because, in the newspaper version, my syndicate would sometimes chop out strips because it's offensive—well, actually, mostly just because [they considered it] offensive. That's why the newspaper version seems a little choppy at times. So when I publish it as a comic book, I fill in the gap [in the story line] that the newspaper editors have dropped out and put back in all the original jokes.

CBM: Now, by offensive, I should probably point out that we're not talking hard core porn, full frontal nudity, or even cats and dogs kissing, right? I mean, we're not even talking about harsh language.

Cho: Right. It's just amazing. Again, each newspaper editor is different about what they find offensive. Actually, one of the funniest things I've ever seen was when they completely deleted the word "bra." They said the word "bra" was offensive. [General laughter] And, of course, if you turn a couple of pages in the newspaper, there's like a full page bra and panty ad!

CBM: Being modeled by real, live women, no less.



Cho's zaftig girls are a combination of Lynda Carter as Wonder Woman and Bettie Page.

Cho: Right, right, with real models! But [in this case,] they find the word "bra" offensive. And, also, a cartoon woman wearing a bra offensive. [Laughter] So you have these weird cases like that. And, like you said before, my stuff isn't like hardcore porn or anything like that. Basically, my strip is PG rated; in some extreme cases, PG-13. But the family newspaper feature editors, they want their cartoons rated G; humorless, and inoffensive.

CBM: Or, better yet, generic.

Cho: Yeah. Very, very bland, generic stuff, that's what they want. Because they don't want the headaches of getting phone calls from these few humorless readers saying, "Oh, I found the word 'butt' offensive!" And, of course instead of defending my strip, most feature editors would listen to this one irate reader and drop my strip.

CBM: The other main two, if I remember correctly, were equally important. The daily grind and the accompanying deadlines have to be getting to you.

Cho: Oh, yeah. I'm getting burned out. It's been five years [of deadlines and censorship], and I'm going to be a new father in December.

CBM: Which is the third reason, yes?

Cho: Yeah, so that's a huge part of the reason [for quitting the syndicate]. With a new baby, I'm not going to meet the daily deadline, period. I need a more flexible deadline, and the newspaper schedule will not give me that flexible deadline. But it's mostly for creative freedom that I'm leaving. As I stated earlier, I just don't want people telling me what I can and can't do with my comic strip. Life's too short, I don't need the editorial and political BS from the newspaper editors.

CBM: Well, just the whole concept that they'd mess with your original art, and redraw your figures and rewrite your dialogue, is horrific enough.

Cho: Guess they haven't heard of free speech, huh?

CBM: Well, that's what the press is for!

Cho: Right. [General laughter]

CBM: There's another aspect to *Liberty Meadows* that has kind of fallen under the radar with the announcement that you'll be moving it from the papers to the comic shops, and that's your hard cover collection of the first year, *Liberty Meadows: Big Book of Love*. Now, that will continue also, correct?

© 2001 FRANK CHO

Bud Plant Comic Art commissioned Cho to do this playful illustration for their 2001 Christmas card.

Cho: If I have my way, there will be a new collection book out every year, or even sooner. So, actually, we're going to start work on the second book soon, [early] next year. So people don't have to worry; the comic book and the collection books will be out on a regular schedule.

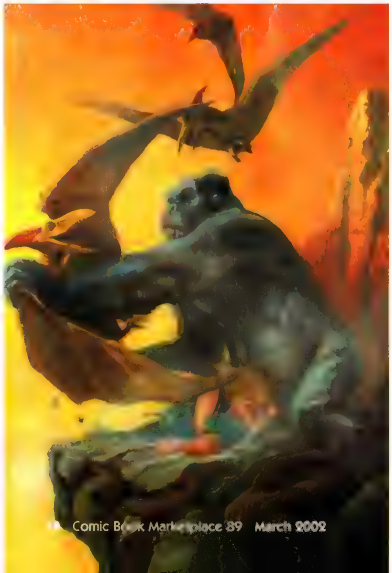
CBM: And, of course, if there is no comic shop nearby, *Liberty Meadows* fans will be able to order these both over the web and via traditional mail order, right?

Cho: Yeah. We have a subscription service through the Insight Studios website, and the *Liberty Meadows* website. [That's www.insightstudiosgroup.com and www.libertymeadows.com FYI]

CBM: And all that info is in the back of the comic, also, if memory serves.

Cho: Right. I am a capitalistic whore! [General laughter]

CBM: "But it's all for my kid, honest!" claims Cho. [More general laughter] You're also becoming a bit of a workhorse, aren't you?



Cho: That's right. I am doing various comic projects in the future. I just signed up to do an eight- or ten-page *Greyshirt* story for Rick Veitch. They're going to send me the script next week. I'm doing a Savage Dragon pin-up for Erik Larsen. *Titanic Tales* 2 for Insight Studios. I just talked with Scott Dunbier at WildStorm, and I will be doing a chapter of a special Tom Strong book which features his daughter, Tesla. [That'll] be five or six pages, I think. Actually, it's going to be a big old jungle story from what I hear with Tom Strong as a Jungle Lord type character. I finally get to do a Tarzan story.

And, also, I will start on *Guns and Dinos*, which will be my own creator owned comic book series. It's a cross between *Jurassic Park*, *Aliens* and *Tremors*. It's a high adventure love story with extreme violence and black humor. I've talked with people from Image, WildStorm, Vertigo and Marvel, and they all have expressed interest in it. But I'm not going to launch it until I have three issues in the can, and I'm going to try to shoot for the end of 2002.

CBM: Will that be an ongoing series?

Cho: It's going to be a mini-series [format]. I'm going to just do big story arcs one at a time, you know what I'm saying?

CBM: OK, something along the Hellboy model, then.

Cho: Exactly like the Hellboy model. Actually, I'm pretty psyched up about that. And, also any other projects that I like that happen to fall on my lap. So, my plate's pretty full.

COLOR GALLERY

(opposite) 'Galleon,' circa 1920s, watercolor; appears in **Hal Foster, Prince of Illustrators—Father of the Adventure Strip** in black and white, never printed in color before.

The two Mountie paintings became available after the book went to press. They are from the Collection of the Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota, Duluth, Gift of the Potlatch Corporation.

Cover to **The School Musician**, October 1929

The Mark Twain piece is Courtesy of the Mark Twain Public Library, Redding, CT. The library was originally founded by Mark Twain, who lived in Redding during the last years of his life. The watercolor was a gift to the library from Hal to commemorate its 50th aniversary. The image appears in the Deluxe Slipcased s/n Collector's Edition of the book.

'Barn,' circa 1920s, watercolor, never printed before.

'Autumn Tree,' 1929, oil on canvas, never printed before.

COLOR GALLERY

Courtesy of the Mark Twain Public Library, Redding, CT

COLOR GALLERY

It is evident from Foster's earliest **Tarzan** pages that he was familiar with the Burroughs version of the story. In this charming example, dated 12/27/31, Numa and Kerchak (from the original story) appear.

Lovely in its simplicity, this early page (1/3/32) shows Tarzan's kinship with the animals, and likely contains backgrounds done by Foster's fellow artists at Palenske-Young Agency.

In another stand-alone page (not part of a story sequence) dated 1/24/32, Foster had help with the background drawings.

ACTOR Auction at MegaCon 2002 Adds Items Straight From the Persian Gulf

LOS ANGELES, Calif., - JANUARY 14, 2002 - ACTOR (A Commitment To Our Roots), a non-profit organization dedicated to helping older comic creators in need, has teamed up with CrossGeneration Comics to bring items to its next charity auction from halfway around the world.

CrossGen sent a pair of massive art prints to the USS Theodore Roosevelt, currently stationed in the Persian Gulf as Part of Operation: Enduring Freedom. The entire crew of the ship has autographed the prints and sent them back. The pair will be auctioned separately at ACTOR's next charity auction at the Orlando MegaCon at the Orange County Convention Center from February 22-24, 2002. Proceeds for these two prints will be split between ACTOR and the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, the charity of choice of the Theodore Roosevelt crew.

"We are very happy that the sailors on board the USS Roosevelt, who are risking their lives to protect our freedom, found some time to sign these posters for these two great causes," said CrossGen Director of Corporate Communications, Ian M. Feller. "Only two of these signed poster sets will exist. One will hang in the CrossGen offices, the other will be auctioned at MegaCon. Talk about owning a piece of history!"

The ACTOR auction consists of over 100 lots, including a treasure trove of original art and signed manuscripts from comic artists and writers. Kevin Smith, writer and director of such hit films as "Clerks" and "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back," will serve as guest auctioneer. Comic art lots from CrossGen Comics Senior Artist George Pérez have already been donated, as have donations from Uncanny X-Men artist Ian Churchill, World Fantasy Award winner Charles Vess, "Liberty Meadows" creator Frank Cho, award-winning painter Alex Ross, comics legend Carmine Infantino, WildStorm Productions Editorial Director Jim Lee, Marvel Comics Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada, and popular CrossGen artists Butch Guice and Greg Land.

About ACTOR.

ACTOR (A Commitment to Our Roots) is dedicated to providing relief and support to many of the talented creators who helped found the comic book industry. Many Golden Age or Silver Age creators toiled in comics' earlier days for low pay and with a nonexistent pension plan. Today, many of these people who laid the groundwork that today's comic industry works on may be in financial need. Be it due to age, health or just low salaries with no retirement plan, they may need a hand. ACTOR provides a safety net for former comic creators in need. ACTOR is dedicated to helping creators with emergency medical aid, financial support, and entrance back into paying work.

ACTOR's 501 (c) (3) paperwork, making it an official non-profit organization, was approved by the federal government in February, 2001.

ACTOR is served by two boards of directors, Jim McLauchlin of Wizard Entertainment, Mark Alessi of

CrossGen Comics, Brian Pulido of Chaos! Comics, Pat McCallum of Wizard Entertainment, Joe Quesada of Marvel Comics, Michael Richardson of Dark Horse Comics and Jim Valentino of Image Comics comprise the Executive/Fund Raising Board which administers the fund's operations and raises money. Dick Giordano, Joe Kubert, Dennis O'Neil, George Pérez, John Romita Sr., and Roy Thomas make up a peer group Fund Disbursement Board that will hear petitions and disburse funds to worthy applicants. Perez and Thomas are the Co-Chairs of that board.

For more information or to send donations to ACTOR please contact:

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About MegaCon

MegaCon is the Southeast's premier comics, gaming, anime and multi-media event, featuring over 100,000 square feet of exhibit space. Among the hundreds of comic book creators on hand to meet fans and sign autographs include: Sergio Aragonés, Brian Michael Bendis, Carmine Infantino, Mike Avon Oeming, George Pérez, David Mack, Greg Rucka, Barry Windsor-Smith, Berni Wrightson, Greg Land, Joseph Michael Linsner, Nick Cardy, George Tuska, Martin Nodell and Harry Lampert.

For more information or to order MegaCon tickets, go to www.megaconvention.com

For continuing updates and to view new art donated to the Orlando MegaCon auction, go to:

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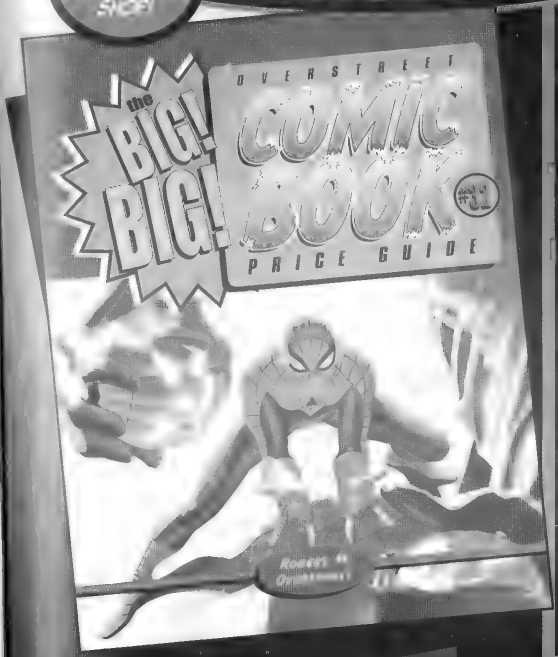

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THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS George Perez INTERVIEW

Part Two of Three

by Bill Baker

Editor's note: In issue 86 we kicked off Bill Baker's extensive CBM *interview with George Perez by focusing on his stints on* The Avengers *and the upcoming Avengers/JLA crossover. This issue, we'll turn our attention to his role in creating The New Teen Titans and* Crisis on Infinite Earths *at DC with writer Marv Wolfman.*

CBM: Was *Teen Titans* your first work with Marv?

Perez: No. Actually we did a *Fantastic Four* annual, and we did a chapter of [an issue of] *What If?* "What if Nova Gave His Power to...," in our case, a villain. So those are the only two times that Marv and I worked together at Marvel. With the exception that Marv was my editor, and one of my staunchest critics, when I started doing the black and white books with *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu*, where he criticized my anatomy, my proportions, my lack of backgrounds—that'll haunt him to his dying day. [General laughter] And he was one of the people who was unafraid to tell me what I was doing wrong, not that anybody was afraid, but [more due to] the fact that they wanted to get the book done [on time]. Marv sat down and skewered me, "Look at all this stuff you're doing wrong!" And I, being cocky as I said, would go home and say, "I'll show that guy! He thinks I don't know [how] to do this!" And I would do a page, [then go back and] show it to Marv, and say, "Now do you think I can do this?" And he'd say, "Yes." But what did I just do? I just proved him right, because I had to make that extra effort in order to prove him wrong; but what I'd done is taken his criticism and used it constructively. But even Marv, at that point, didn't think I would make it too long in the business.

When we got to work together [at DC], by that point, of course, I had already established a reputation. And Marv had gone over to DC, along with Len Wein, and approached me about the possibility of doing a new version of *The Teen Titans* book—which I freely admit I thought was a laughable proposition. I was only interested in doing the Justice League over at DC. And I said, "Give me a couple of fillers on *Justice League*, and we can start on the *Titans*," figuring that it was going to be canceled in six issues.

But I must admit that when Marv started coming up with the suggestions based on ideas that he and Len Wein had come up with, it started sounding more exciting. I still didn't think it was going to last six issues because, hey, this was DC; nothing is going to succeed at this point. But Marv was genuinely excited, genuinely creative. I had never really seen Marv's creative side on a starting point, [only] his finished work. I loved his [*Tomb of*] *Dracula* stuff. But doing superheroes I never thought was Marv's strongest suit. But I liked the ideas. He wanted to make this a super-hero group [in something] that wasn't quite a super-hero book, try to get those best elements that made books like *Fantastic Four* successful—that sense of family and camaraderie—understanding that we were going to be getting comparisons to The X-Men which were just coming into their big peak period with John Byrne and Chris Claremont.

So I was saying, "OK, fine," and came up with the designs for some new characters. And then DC gave us this big sign of their faith in the project when they came up with this idea of having a special preview story in *DC Presents*, which had not been done before—of having basically a free comic added into the body of another comic. But they wanted *The Teen Titans* to come out with the best chances [of success]. I was not the only one who was skeptical about the *Titans* success, but one of the great things when it finally did come out [was that it worked].

At first Marv's plots were a lot more complete, there was a lot more characterization in them until I started understanding where Marv was going; then I could start adding in little things, here and there, with the characters. And when Len started backing away from the co-plotting part of his editor's job, it became strictly Marv and me. But at first it was Marv's

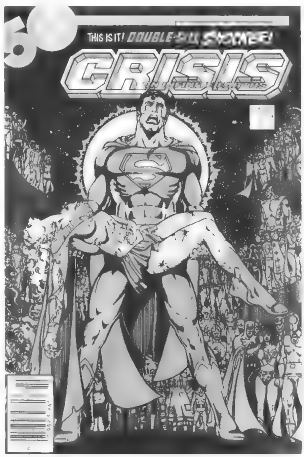
vision filtered [through] Len Wein. And me, I was there to add a little punch. But, as we got more and more into it, I realized, "You know, this book could be special." And when reviews came in—of course this was before the Internet reviews, we had to wait for reviews—we realized how popular this could be. After missing the fifth issue, I would end up staying on the book for an uninterrupted run of almost 25 more issues. And it became much more personal.

And probably the biggest personal success I had, because when I was doing *The Avengers* before I really had no knowledge of what sales were, because there were no royalties to receive. There was no way for us to know how well the book was doing. But, in the case of *The Titans*, when the book was getting all these great reviews, they said it was selling well. And once they started offering royalties over at DC, it was [essentially] a *Titans* royalty program, because *Titans* was really the only book that was earning enough to earn royalties at DC under the new royalty structure. It was a book whose success could be measured by my involvement for the first time. *The Titans* probably would not have succeeded with another creative team on it. Marv Wolfman and George Perez made *The Titans* a successful book and, in a way, helped rebuild DC Comics' credibility in the comics industry. So that was an incredibly wonderful feeling of accomplishment. And, even more than *The Avengers*, I think, that's why *The Titans* is a book that I'll probably be forever known for, because it was the one book that came out of the blue. No one expected that book to be successful.

CBM: Was it the interaction between the characters, as much as the action and adventures, that made it what it was?

Perez: I think the interaction was most important to Marv and me, and that became apparent in issue eight. We had some exciting stuff, it had some nice characterization bits—you know, we had the angry cyborg, and the sexy bombshell from outer space, the mysterious woman in black—but it was issue eight where those Titans found their voice. The "Day in the Life," the quiet issue where Marv's many years of doing the characterization stuff on Dracula, and my desire to do interaction scenes: I think that's when Marv and I both knew this was a special book. "Now we like these characters, these characters are living now. They don't need to do super-heroic things to make them interesting!" And from that point on, that was *The Titans*. During the last couple of years of my involvement with the series, Marv never had to write a plot for the book anymore. He and I discussed it, then I drew it. It became such a symbiotic relationship; we understood where we wanted these characters to go, and we knew how these characters would go under their own steam. There, the old chestnut of "the characters writing themselves" was actually quite true.

But seldom have two people worked together, from two diverse backgrounds, on a super-hero or any comic book and found a [common] voice [to the point] that they could second guess each other [so] very well. Marv and I no longer worked as writer and artist; we were the creator, combined as one, for the series. And Marv was just, because of my involvement with *The Titans*, [he] was my biggest champion to try to get me to start writing stuff. He was impressed enough that he said, "You may need help with the wordsmithing, probably, but as far as storytelling and actual story concepts, you're already there!" because there was so much of me in *The Titans* at that point. So I always thank Marv. Marv's done a lot in furthering me in my career, and my desire to go just a little further and expand my horizons that I think, not until Kurt Busiek on [the recent incarnation of] *Avengers*, have I experienced that same level of creative synergy with a writer.



CBM: Were there any problems working together, or was it all incredibly easy?

Perez: Sometimes he and I would have different viewpoints as to where a character would go, but then we found compromise. He would plot it, I would draw it; if I wanted to make any changes—without, again, affecting the story, ever—I would draw that in. If he disagreed, a little bit of dialogue might change the intent of the drawing—without, again, affecting the story.

The biggest advantage that Marv and I had was a willingness to suppress ego for the sake of the book. There were times when I thought Marv was wrong. I'm sure there were times when Marv thought I was wrong. But, in the long run, the fans loved the stories and that's what we were there for! It was mostly a won-

derful working relationship that had its ups and downs, like any kind of relationship. But I consider Marv still a friend, and, thankfully, if he's called it's something he's never denied. [General laughter] And I consider the time we spent on *The Titans* some of the most creatively fulfilling years of my life. And, as far as working with him, following that with *Crisis on Infinite Earths* was a pure joy, too.

CBM: You mentioned earlier that you got to design some of the new characters, like Cyborg, Raven, etc. How much input did you have into the basic creation, outside of the visuals, of those characters?

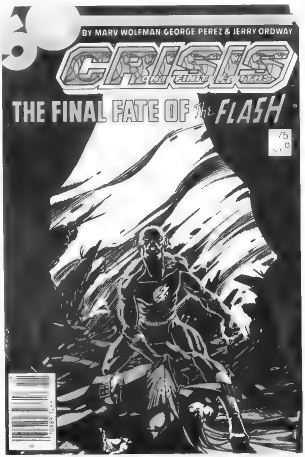
Perez: Initially, not very much. Cyborg, I was a little more [involved]. Since I grew up in the South Bronx and [come] from a Puerto Rican background I had a little more I could actually put into Cyborg's personality, from the way he stood and everything else. For me, Kory was just this Red Sonja from outer space, and Raven was the Phantom Stranger in drag. So I just treated that as archetypes, and just designed it from there. It wasn't until Marv and I talked a bit more that I started understanding where Marv was going—when issue eight came in—that is when I really, really started putting more into their characterizations. From the inside, as opposed to letting Marv tell me how they're behaving. [From then on] I understood how they behaved, and each character had a little extra soul in them as well.

CBM: I think one of the other important aspects of this series, one that helped make it particularly popular, was that these characters grew in the course of the title. We literally got to watch them grow up.

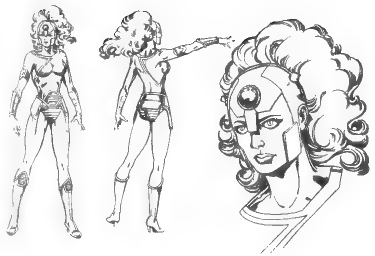
Perez: Yes. Following the essential [rule of comics], what's called "the illusion of change," you can only change them so much. [But here], the one change that made it really seem like growth was, of course, Dick Grayson abandoning the Robin costume and character to become Nightwing. That one scene alone made *The Titans* unique. Because, even *The X-Men*, with the death of Phoenix—well Phoenix is back, and has been for many, many years! [General laughter] Professor X was dead, [too,] you know. But Dick Grayson is still Nightwing. There's been two Robins since him. And that was a great feeling of progress. [Until then, with] Dick Grayson—who at first was the character we worried about the most because, since he was tied to the Batman books—there was little we could do with him. When DC courageously allowed Marv and me to have control over the Dick Grayson character, by replacing him as Robin, [it allowed] the creation of the most memorable of *The Titans* stories..."The Judas Contract" and the issues that preceded it. *The Titans* were no longer just teenage allies of established adult characters—or, as I called them, "The Justice Little League"—they were a unique group of people who grew up. And I think Dick Grayson was the linchpin of that concept. His coming of age and abandoning the garb of his youth for a more adult role, I think, is what made the feeling of maturation evident in *The Titans*. And the fact that those [changes] are still in existence today, he's still Nightwing [only reinforces that].

CBM: Why don't we talk about *Crisis* for a bit? Was this an intimidating job to take on?

Perez: Oh, heavens no! Not for me. I mean, "More characters? Fine. How many characters? Is that all!" is usually my attitude. I don't intimidate that easily when it comes to a book that has that many characters in it, particularly since, when I first went on to *Crisis*, I had no intention of co-plotting the darn thing! The plot was going to be handled by Marv Wolfman, Len Wein and Robert Greenberg. "Good! That means if anybody hates the story, they'll be blamed! I just want them to like the pictures!" [General laughter] So I was gonna have the time of my life. I was going to draw all these characters, characters I'd never drawn before professionally. I was too excited to be intimidated.



It wasn't until half way through the series when I realized that—because of the incredible nature of it—Marv was being overwhelmed by aspects of the story [because] there was a lot to be juggled. There was one scene in which one character, I believe it was Harbinger, did something, and then, in the next script, she did the same exact thing. He repeated the whole sequence and no one noticed it until I saw it in the plot. And that's when I said, "You know,



But it was a series that was incredibly large and ambitious, and regarded as only moderately successful. Because I don't think, in order to be everything to everybody, it had a chance of being fully successful. Because there were going to be people who felt disenfranchised because of all the changes, and how much [continuity] are you willing to abandon, and even simple everyday, mundane aspects like, "OK, we've gotten rid of Supergirl. But how are we going to hold on to our copyright and trademark on Supergirl unless we actually print Supergirl?" So you have to bring back Supergirl. Granted, it's in a different form; they found a way of doing it via the Matrix character. So there were bound to be ways where *Crisis* would have to fail. There's no way it could fully succeed in what it intended to do without angering and possibly dissatisfying and alienating certain sections of either creators or fans. But, artistically, it was a dream come true.

maybe he just needs another voice, a voice he trusts," and that's when I came in as co-plotter. When I came in, Marv was more than happy, because that's the way Marv is. So, of course, now if somebody didn't like something that happened, now I could have some of the blame. See, I was intimidated once I had to co-plot, but I was still like, "You know, this is a really juicy story. I need to be involved in it, and I need to make sure that we don't let too many things go through the cracks," because Lord knows there are plenty of cracks to slip through in books like *Crisis*.

CBM: Yeah. Talk about working without a net!

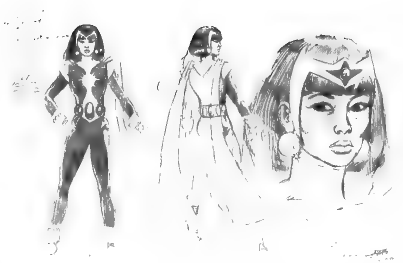
Perez: Uh-huh. And the fact that, since the industry was so different at the time, there was only so far DC was willing to go. I mean, they were known for being very creator-friendly. So even though they wanted all the creators on the other books to adjust their storylines, and have their characters change to accommodate *Crisis*, they didn't want to force anyone into that. Various exceptions had to be made. But Roy Thomas, I think, was the biggest victim because, of course, the entire book centers around the whole universe thing that started with the Golden Age Earth Two characters. So he was going to be affected head on, and pretty much would have no choice in the matter, but others were not forced into it

Marv's original idea [was] that, "If we're going to do this, to have a whole new beginning, let's start with #1 issues of all the books once *Crisis* is over," as if suddenly DC, both in the books and in reality, had to start over. And everyone started [objecting, saying,] "We're in the middle of story lines!" And DC didn't feel like the idea of suddenly having all these #1 books would sell well, or be a good idea. Of course, this is before #1 issues were coming left and right, and everything was being relaunched. And whether, in the long run, that would have been successful is subject to debate ad infinitum.

CBM: Do you see it as one of the high-water marks in your career?

Perez: Oh yeah. Titans continued after my stint. Wonder Woman, obviously, did [too]. All the other books did. *Crisis* was mine. Artistically, it was mine. When they talk about *Crisis*, they talk about George Perez's work on *Crisis*. *Crisis* was an entity, a collected work. It was all my artwork. I loved

it. It was a great high-water mark. For all its failures, it did have an impact both on DC Comics and the industry. Both for good and for ill. *Crisis*, like Titans, had an impact on DC Comics—and I was there! What a great feeling.



CBM: There's a couple of moments that really stand out in the series. You mentioned one, of course, which was the death of Supergirl. But there was another one which, in many ways, had an even bigger emotional impact: The death of Barry Allen.

Perez: Uh-huh. You know, The Flash, unlike Supergirl... Supergirl was basically a female version of Superman. She wasn't the first of her kind, she was basically a female copy of another character. The Flash was unique. It was like killing Superman as opposed to killing Supergirl. And the fact that The Flash was the start, by most people's reckoning, of the Silver Age—I mean, as far as important characters go; Martian Manhunter preceded him—so killing him was something that even Marv did not think they'd go for. The killing of The Flash was the point where, "OK, we've killed Supergirl. Now we've killed The Flash. Anything can go now."

The weirdest part of it is the fact that all of the publicity went to Supergirl's death, not only because Superman is so identifiable, but because there was a movie coming out with Supergirl. So here we are killing a character who's just had a movie come out. I think if the movie succeeded, she still might have been alive. I don't know.

But killing The Flash was like, "Wow, we're killing The Flash." And the fact that when he died, at that point, nobody knew. He died alone, unlike Supergirl who had this big, dramatic death and big funeral sequence almost immediately after her death. The Flash, for quite a while, no one knew that he was dead. And that was a little eerie.

CBM: And also pretty realistic. I mean, typically, when someone dies in comics, it's very big and dramatic, like Supergirl's demise. But realistically, in a battle of that size and scope, there will be at least some people who are missing in action, and can only be presumed dead.

Perez: Exactly. Because of the story taking place in different areas of the galaxy, different dimensions, different times, there are a bunch of characters who died that I'm sure they'd have no knowledge that these characters died, and in some cases, no knowledge that they actually existed. It's just that The Flash was an icon.

CBM: In a lot of ways, it was the final knell of whatever Silver Age remnants there might have been holding on in the DCU of the time.

Perez: Yeah. And, then again, there were those that that's what they disliked about *Crisis*. But, once again, that's what we were expecting. "We're not gonna please everybody." There were going to be those who are saying, "How dare you kill this character," or "[Why kill] this popular a character?" Well, that's what happens in a story. You know people complain about it not being realistic; and then when you kill a character, well, that's realistic! But if you kill a character that somebody likes...nobody likes seeing a family member die, but that's what happens. It's one of the few times, because you created the universe, that you can argue with God. [General laughter]

Next : Wonder Woman and more

Frazetta and Foster:

by Dr. David Winiewicz © 2001

Some Thoughts

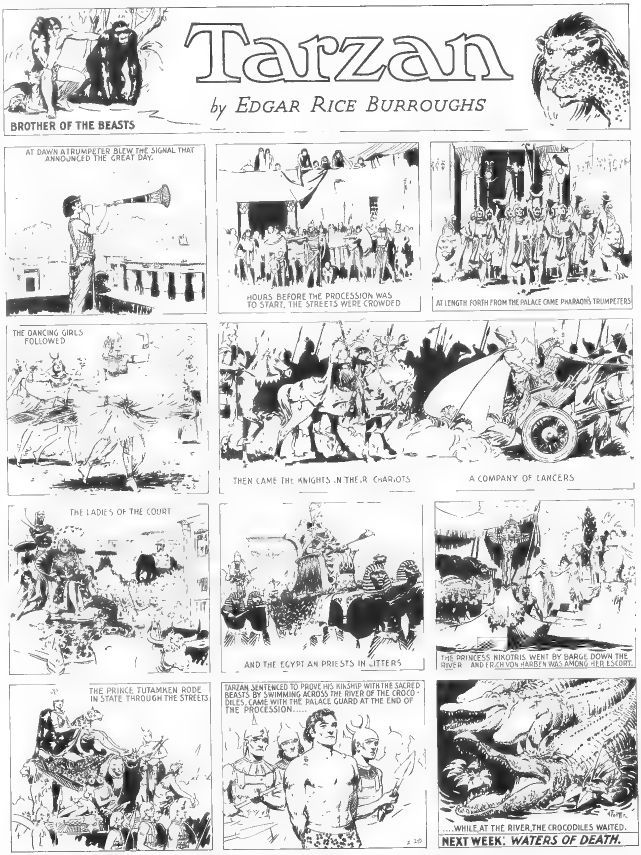
Visiting Frazetta is always an interesting and rewarding experience. Invariably, I am first greeted at the door by an ebullient Ellie Frazetta who shuffles me into the kitchen for a short chat. Ellie is an absolutely wonderful cook and the delicious anticipation of sitting down at her table later in the day always excites my taste buds. The meticulously clean house has a magical atmosphere about it. You're surrounded by original art, African artifacts, and all sorts of exotic furnishings. After a little lively banter I descend through the family room into Frank's studio. Frank is usually painting, or fiddling with a camera as I enter.

He greets me with a big, welcoming smile and a vigorous handshake. "Dave, are you ready for some coffee?" Frank is a coffee connoisseur and easily downs a dozen cups during a typical visit. Then we sit down and Frank asks me what is new, what is everyone talking about? And so begins another wide-ranging discussion in which many points are considered. I have spent hundreds of hours with Frazetta talking about everything from Plato's view of art to the coating on camera lenses.

On one particular visit I mentioned to Frank that several comments were going around that concerned the relation between Frazetta and Hal Foster (of *Tarzan* and *Prince Valiant* fame). It was suggested, rather boldly, that Frazetta swiped routinely from Foster and that, ultimately, Frazetta was just a Foster imitator. Frank looked at me as if I had just brought a dead rat into the studio. These were unenlightened comments to be sure and I told Frank that this kind of thinking bordered on lunacy. Frank's response was direct and immediate. He jumped out of his chair and passionately roared: "Look at the walls! There! [Pointing to the *Death Dealer*] There! [Pointing to the *Golden Girl*] There! [Pointing to *Conan the Warrior*] Where do you see Foster? Show me just a part. Show me where you see Foster. HE IS NOT THERE! Period." Frank's response was perfect and final. However, this leads to a few thoughts on Frank's early influences. Some people say that Frank is such an original that he shows no influences. That is, of course, absurd. Everyone is the result of some prior influence. These conflicting ideas need a little clarification and comment.

Like everyone else, Frazetta's childhood was filled with direct and powerful influences of every sort. What one sees and experiences in their childhood is so important in the growth process. No one escapes their childhood. Frazetta roamed, ran, jumped, and stalked all sorts of real and imagined creatures in his tough and violent Brooklyn neighborhood. His costume was a simple sweatshirt adorned with a picture of a black panther. He identified with the big cats, with their stealth, smoothness, and quick transition to violent action. After a full day of furious

FRAZETTA and FOSTER


Tarzan
by EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS
BROTHER OF THE BEASTS
AT DAWN A TRUMPETER BLEW THE SIGNAL THAT ANNOUNCED THE GREAT DAY.
HOURS BEFORE THE PROCESSION WAS TO START, THE STREETS WERE CROWDED
AT LENGTH FORTH FROM THE PALACE CAME PHARAOH'S TRUMPETERS
THE DANCING GIRLS FOLLOWED
THEN CAME THE KNIGHTS IN THEIR CHARIOTS
A COMPANY OF LANCERS
THE LADIES OF THE COURT
AND THE EGYPTIAN PRIESTS IN LITTERS
THE PRINCESS NIKOTRIS WENT BY BARGE DOWN THE RIVER AND FROM VON HARDEN WAS AMONG HER ESCORT.
THE PRINCE TUTAMKEN RODE IN STATE THROUGH THE STREETS
TARZAN, SENTENCED TO PROVE HIS KINSHIP WITH THE SACRED BEASTS BY SWIMMING ACROSS THE RIVER OF THE CROCODILES, CAME WITH THE PALACE GUARD AT THE END OF THE PROCESSION.....
...WHILE AT THE RIVER, THE CROCODILES WAITED.
NEXT WEEK: WATERS OF DEATH.
TARZAN © EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS INC.

Always striving for historical accuracy, Foster researched Egyptian artifacts for his most famous TARZAN sequence in 1933-1934. This example is dated January 29, 1934. His later PRINCE VALIANT strips were extensively researched as well.

activity, Frazetta would return home and immediately begin to draw. It was almost as if the world's energy had entered his soul and lit up his imagination. That special magical energy would now appear on the page before him. Frazetta told me that often he would pray for a rainy day so he could just sit and draw without the enticement of the play world calling him. Frazetta is unique. There has never been a more physical artist; raised without the dominance of television, video games, and other imagination-killing devices. His was a world of comic books, newspaper strips, pulps, and his own incredible fantasies.

In published interviews and in countless private discussions, Frazetta has meticulously admitted and explained these early influences. Frank looked at the early Tarzan novels before he could even read; he loved the pictures by St. John. He also marveled at the newspaper strip art of Hal Foster. When he got the *Tarzan Single Series* #20 comic book, he said it was like the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The young Frazetta absorbed everything and was affected by everything. He loved the early Walt Disney cartoons, especially *Fantasia* and *Snow White*. He loved early toys and their exquisite colorings. There was a time when Milton Caniff was Frazetta's main influence. Frank has several early sketchbooks filled with thick-lined drawings heavily influenced by Caniff. Frank also thoroughly enjoyed the cartoons of Carl Anderson's *Henry*; he was impressed by their complete simplicity and economy of line. *Popeye* by Segar was another top favorite; Frank loved the manic energy and loony characters. And, of course, he loved the panel-bursting art of Jack Kirby that was everywhere. If you know where to look, one can clearly see all these influences mysteriously mixed and transformed in the art of Frazetta.

Frazetta's highest praise has always been reserved for Hal Foster. In particular, Frank absolutely loved the early Foster *Tarzan* strips from 1932-1935. For forty years, Frazetta had an original Foster *Tarzan* hanging in his living room. The page is dated 1-21-34 ("The Captive King") and it is a rare jewel resplendent with jungle, apes, and furious action. This is where Foster was at a creative peak, bursting with originality, creativity, and nonstop vitality. Frank describes Foster's *Tarzan* as "perfection," a landmark in American twentieth-century art that will never be surpassed. Frazetta was not as impressed with the later *Prince Valiant* pages where Foster became very "stagey" and reserved. The art was tremendous illustration but it never went beyond mere draftsman's facility into fine art. However, those early Tarzans had a constant explosive dynamism and fluidity that appealed to Frank greatly. The backgrounds provided a real atmosphere. There was genuine passion in those early

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FRAZETTA and FOSTER

TARZAN ART © EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS INC. THUNDA © N.E. PRINCE VALIANT © KFS

Two examples of Frazetta "swipes" from Foster: At left, a 1929 panel from a Foster Tarzan daily, compared to one of Frazetta's earliest paintings for Ace Books for **Tarzan and the Lost Empire**. The similarity of the figure of Tarzan is obvious, but Frazetta has improved upon the musculature of the back and arms, and made the hair and loincloth more flowing. Right: A 1937 panel from Prince Valiant, compared to a panel from Frazetta's **Thunda** (1952). Here again, while the basic figure is similar, Frazetta has made slight improvements with the position of the right hand, the lighting on the head, and given more movement to the figure by lifting the right leg, giving the impression the man is running instead of walking.

efforts and Frazetta responded to that. Many people think that Frazetta's comic work on *White Indian* and *Thun'da* was strongly influenced by Foster. This is true to a limited extent. He did borrow a few images, but he always greatly improved them in the process. Frazetta never copies; he sees or remembers a visual idea and polishes it to a higher standard of perfection. Frank did not want to copy or imitate Foster; this would be an artistic dead end and completely antithetical to Frank's artistic personality. Pointing to six or seven borrowed images from a total output of thousands of drawings is a pretty desperate and futile strategy. Frazetta wanted his own voice, his own style, his own approach. Frank wanted to make his own mark in the field. The real influence of Foster on Frazetta was one of artistic philosophy or aesthetic direction. Foster's world was something that could be *believed*; it had a solid sense of reality at its core. The viewer could actually live in that world and experience vicarious thrills as Tarzan swung through the trees, discovered lost cities, and battled savage apes and ferocious animals. That was precisely the direction that Frazetta wanted to pursue in his art. St. John was too romantic, too dreamy, not hard-edged. You just could not get hurt in St. John's world. With Foster, real death and animal attacks were right around the corner; you had to watch where you stepped.

Ultimately, Frazetta thoroughly eclipsed and transcended the work of Foster. Frazetta carried the art of drawing and painting to heights that Foster would never have dreamed possible. Frazetta produced totally original works of absolute genius time after time. Legions of artists began to imitate him. Frazetta's world is one of supercharged reality, a world stripped of all its false facades and charades. Frazetta's world is one of raw, elemental passions and volcanic incident. It is also a world of beauty, sublime and dangerous beauty. Frazetta continued to get better and better, more sophisticated, thoroughly creative and distinctive. Everything comes together in the magical series of drawings he did for the Canaveral Press in the early 1960s. Nothing in art history compares to them. At the same time he exploded on the scene with paintings that would revolutionize the paperback industry. All this is subject for another essay. We leave it at that. A young boy grows up and becomes a world-shaking presence in the art world; one of the most studied and mimicked artists who ever lived. Frazetta's pen and brush lit up the world with joy and nobility and beauty. The world owes him a debt of gratitude.

IN

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #90

OUR PATRIOTIC ISSUE!

Inspiration Central
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and **New & Noteworthy**
return with **ALL NEW** columns

Plus

An Interview with Dark Horse's
DAVID SCROGGY about their
CLASSIC COMIC CHARACTERS line of Syroco-like figures!

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The swingin' 1960s were almost over by the time the 64-page Harvey Teen Giant *Fruitman Special*, was published. That didn't deter Harvey's middle-aged editorial staff from attempting to create a "zoovy" super-hero parody-comic. ("Zoovy"? That's one of the non-words that are typical of Harvey's approximation of "hip lingo.")

The first self-titled "Fruitman" story (penciled by Ernie Colon and inked by Howie Post) introduces us to mild-mannered fruit-grocer Percival Pineapple, who's secretly Fruitman, a super-hero with the power to transform himself into various *fruits*! (This utterly oddball ability—the "origin" of which is related in a text page that's too silly and lengthy to recount here—precludes the necessity for Fruitman to wear a costume—when he's in his super-fruity identity, he operates in the *raw*! Owtch!) When a nearby bank is robbed, the punning crime-fighter turns himself into a lemon, squirting juice into the eye of one of the bank robbers! But since the other crook escaped with the loot, Fruitman becomes a blueberry and hitches a ride to their hideout in the felon's coat pocket. Changing into an orange, Fruitman crashes through their window, then becomes a banana, shedding his slippery peel to cause them to fall and knock themselves "plum unconscious!" Fruitman finally transforms himself into an apple, and telephones the police for assistance. But when the police detectives show up to arrest the pair of robbers, they idly pick some apples from a nearby fruit bowl and begin to eat them!

DETECTIVE #1: We detectives have had it real easy since this fantastic Fruitman has come on the scene!

DETECTIVE #2: You said it, Murph—here, have an APPLE!

DETECTIVE #1: Thanks, Irving! Who—chomp—IS this amazing Fruitman, anyway? Chomp!

DETECTIVE #2: Yeah—munch—who IS he? Crunch!

ROBBER #1: I believe one of you boys just DEVOURED him! Hee, heee!

FRUITMAN: Fear NOT, dear reader! I'm still ALIVE! And I shall RETURN with NEW FANTASTIC ADVENTURES!

Other Fruitman stories in this issue include "Fruitman vs. Shmasty And McGee," "Fruitman's Vacation," "Once Upon A Vine" and "The Great Feast," as well as stories of two other far-out (if somewhat less fruity) super-heroes, "Sooper Hippie" and "Captain Flower!"

"Sooper Hippie" (drawn by *Anthro*'s Howie Post), begins as street hippie Stanley Humbert (named after *Lolita*'s "Humbert Humbert" perhaps?) gives sitar lessons to a Ravi Shankar lookalike (and there's the splash page to prove it! Check out that nearby burning banana peel they've apparently been smoking—let's hope it's not the remains of Fruitman!). But once back in his "ordinary hippie pad" it's revealed that Stanley's actually Sooper Hippie! When the longhaired hero receives a call from the Intercosmic Peace Corps, he takes off for Mars Outpost #9 to stop "Mary Boppers, Bad Space Lady" who's buggin' their whole irrigation project. Meanwhile on Mars, Joe Cleancut of the I.P.C. is trying to teach the Martians how to dig canals, but Mary Boppers keeps filling the canals with fast-drying cement as soon as they're dug! They need the canals to irrigate the local lotus fields(!), which provide the primary sustenance for the fast-breeding Martians, who are in the midst of a population explosion. (Don't you just love this

strip's overuse of all of these outdated buzz-terms?) Arriving on Mars, Sooper Hippie becomes momentarily stuck in a cement-filled canal, but uses an "outasite cement softener" to escape. He and Joe uncover the sexy-but-evil Mary Boppers, who's disguised as an old crone, as she peddles "fresh lotus snacks" for the price of "500 groovers" apiece! She makes a getaway on her propeller-powered balloon, but Sooper Hippie is hot on her trail. Arriving at her floating "space bungalow," Sooper Hippie is captured by one of her man-eating flowers, only to awaken in Mary's "infernal lab," bound to an examination table!

MARY BOPPERS: You are my captive, Sooper Hippie—and I know YOUR ONE WEAKNESS! You're allergic to GRASS!

SOOPER HIPPIE: Mary Boppers, you give off bad vibrations! Dig a crazy barber chair!

("Allergic to grass"?!? Hmph, some hippie *he* is!)

Before he sneezes himself into oblivion, Sooper Hippie makes a final request—that Mary Boppers gives him a kiss "goodbye!" But Sooper Hippie's "Love Power" overwhelms her, causing Mary to totally "change her bag!" (Take a look at the strip's final page–hey, Austin Powers has got nothin' on *this* guy!)

"Captain Flower Meets 'Lectric Man"(drawn by *Sad Sack*'s Fred Rhodes, as seen on the splash page) introduces Freddie the Flower Boy, who's secretly the hippie superhero Captain Flower! When Sweet Mom, owner of "the flower folks' favorite hangout, The Flower Pot" complains that a new "hip joint" across the street is stealing all of her customers, Freddie approaches its owner, the bloated 'Lectric Man, to "push some business back across the street." But after 'Lectric Man's electrified handshake sends Freddie crashing back inside The Flower Pot ("Oh goody! A PEACE RIOT!" cackles Sweet Mom), the dazed flower boy sniffs one of his flowers and becomes Captain Flower! He peacefully confronts 'Lectric Man as well, but once again the high-voltage villain's electrified handshake blasts Freddie/Captain Flower, hurling him across the street and onto the roof of The Flower Pot. As his form crackles with electricity, Captain Flower winds up attracting a new crowd of long haired customers to Sweet Mom's saloon, thus saving the day (without an inkling as to the nature of our hero's superpowers, if any!)

Fruitman Special
Vol. I No. 1 (December 1969)
Publisher: Harvey Publications, Inc.
Cover Artist: Unknown

This issue of the *Fruitman Special* also features a two-page ad for ABC's 1969 "Super Saturday" TV morning cartoon line-up! Oddly, the ad's artwork was drawn by the *MAD* magazine cartoonist Jack Rickard!

ODDBALL Factoid - The Fruitman Special is that oddest of funny book rarities, an Oddball spin-off (and reprint book) from another Oddball Comic—namely, Harvey's *Bunny, Queen of the In-Crowd*, where Fruitman's strip had been appearing under the "Bunny Ball Fantasy Theatre" umbrella feature for three years before reappearing here!

Fostering the Adventure Strip

Hal Foster's reputation is secure enough, after all these years, that it can stand comparison with Burne Hogarth's. And Foster has often been confronted by Hogarth because they both made their reputations with *Tarzan*. There, however, the similarity almost ceases—to the credit of both artists.

Foster was the first artist to draw Tarzan for newspapers; he was also the third artist on the feature. And Foster was so successful in introducing the techniques of realistic illustration on the funnies page that he deserves, without quibble—well, without much quibble—the title bestowed upon him by Brian M. Kane in a new book called *Harold Foster: Father of the Adventure Strip*. Kane also calls Foster "Prince of Illustrators," and he probably deserves that honorific, too. It's a handsome book, admirably produced and lovingly researched and profusely illustrated, and I'll get back to it in a moment. But first, that pesky comparison between Foster and Hogarth.

Hogarth took over the *Tarzan* Sunday page from Foster in May 1937, left it for about eighteen months in late 1945, and returned for a final three-year tour, abandoning the Ape Man for good in 1950. And because Foster was Hogarth's immediate predecessor, comparisons between the work of the two were inevitable then as they are now. The most helpful comparison, it seems to me, is the one made by Thomas A. Pendleton in an article published by the *Journal of Popular Culture* in the spring of 1979, "Tarzan of the Papers."

The thing Pendleton made me realize about Foster and Hogarth is that while Foster's Tarzan was supremely realistic, Hogarth's was triumphantly supra-realistic. If Foster's Tarzan is heroic, Hogarth's is unquestionably super-heroic. And this evaluation is to the detriment of neither artist.

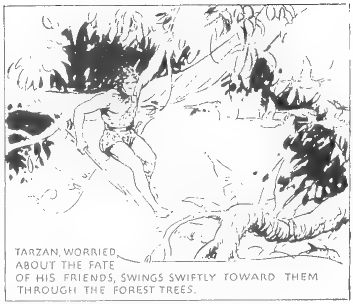
The realism of Foster's *Tarzan*, Pendleton demonstrates, is of a particular breed. Foster may portray Tarzan doing something impossible, something simply beyond human capability, but he draws Tarzan in a way that persuades us that if it were possible to do the stunt being depicted, this is the way it would be done. "Thus, when Foster presents Tarzan performing one of his remarkable feats, there is always the sense that the feat is being performed with the limited means of the human body."

While it is Foster's meticulously realistic depiction of human anatomy in action that achieves the rhetorical purpose in his *Tarzan*, in Hogarth's *Tarzan* we find the visual rhetoric pitched at an extremity. Hogarth's anatomy and

AGAIN ON SOLID EARTH, HE RAN LIKE THE WIND. A WILD CRY TOLD HIM THAT BOHGDU, HIS FAITHFUL APE HAD ESCAPED TOO, AND TARZAN CALLED TO HIM.
WITH LIGHTNINGLIKE AGILITY, HE LEAPED FROM THE POOL, AND SPED FOR THE TREES BEYOND.

In these nearly identical poses of Tarzan running straight at us, Foster's (left) displays the possible realistically, and while Hogarth's is impossible (no human can achieve this position while running; they'd fall on their face first), it is nonetheless persuasive through the very energy of its composition.

postures seem realistic, but they often are not. Hogarth goes beyond realism. No human being could take the positions that Hogarth's Tarzan takes. But since Hogarth's much touted (mostly by Hogarth himself) "dynamic anatomy" is rooted in actuality, his exaggeration of its capabilities seems possible. We are persuaded to accept this possibility by Hogarth's drawings, by the tension he imparted to his Tarzan's musculature—the body flayed of a layer of skin to show muscles bunched and ready, coiled to spring into violent activity.



Foster's Tarzan swinging through the trees. And how will Foster's Tarzan grab the next available vine?

Foster shows us how, in some considerable detail, an action might be accomplished; Hogarth ignores the actual physical performance of the act. He shows us Tarzan in motion, in the midst of a flurry of apparently strenuous activity. His depiction of Tarzan's muscles assures us of the strenuousness of an action, and that, in turn, convinces us that Tarzan has actually done it—or is doing it. Hogarth doesn't show us how something is done so much as he persuades us that it could be done, or has been done, by performing this visual sleight-of-hand. We think we've seen it, but we haven't, actually. Hogarth communicated a sense of power; Foster, a vision of reality.

But even Foster, passionate realist that he was, sometimes rather obviously dropped the ball. On his *Tarzan* page for December 13, 1931, for instance, he shows us the Lord of the Jungle swinging, as was his wont, through the trees, from vine to vine to vine. After eighty years of Edgar Rice Burroughs' telling us about this stunt, we are so jaded by familiarity with the routine that we, today, don't notice the impossibility that Foster has foisted off on us. But surely some of his readers back then, newer to the ritual, must've noticed that Tarzan was carrying a spear in his right hand as he swung through the trees, thereby making his vine-to-vine progress virtually impossible. Think about it: how does he grab the next vine if one of his hands is fully committed to another task?

Foster rarely slipped so blatantly. But in those early months on the feature, he was, as he often said, just "scratching them out." His scorn for the medium was barely contained. When he began receiving fan mail, however, he realized that readers scarcely shared his low opinion of the product he was manufacturing. They loved it. And once Foster came to appreciate their devotion, he, too, became more devoted to his work. And the realism he exercised in the jungles of Africa turned out to be good practice for depicting another world, one that never actually existed at all.

Born in 1892 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, Foster acquired from his stepfather an affection for hunting and fishing and the outdoor life, a fondness often on display in *Prince Valiant*. While he would later earn money from time to time as a guide for hunting expeditions, by the time he was nineteen, he was making a living illustrating mail-order catalogues. He worked for a succession of printing concerns and agencies, establishing himself as a competent commercial artist. (Kane's book includes a glorious 16-page color section that displays many examples from about this period of Foster's skill as a painter.) By 1921, however, Foster felt he had reached a professional plateau and so left Canada for Chicago, where he found a position at an advertising agency. And it was there that he was discovered by Joseph Neebe in 1928.

An advertising operative, Neebe had founded Famous Books and Plays, an enterprise for producing illustrated serialized literature for syndication to newspapers. In form, the product looked much like a comic strip albeit without speech balloons—a "strip" of individual illustrations beneath which ran narrative typeset text abridging the book or play. In this effort, Neebe joined other entrepreneurs of the period who were doing much the same—among them, a certain Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, a one-time cavalry officer who would, a scant half-dozen years later, produce another kind of illustrated literature when he started publishing comic books. Neebe made a deal with Burroughs to adapt *Tarzan of the Apes* and when Burroughs' cover artist, Allen St. John, was not interested, Neebe approached Foster, whom he knew through a mutual engagement in advertising.

Using a script adaptation by R.W. Palmer, Foster produced 300 panels to illustrate a ten-week serialization of Burroughs' novel. Then he went back to advertising. The serial began in England in November 1928; in the U.S., it

started on January 7, 1929, and concluded March 16. Rex Maxon continued the serialized *Tarzan*, illustrating *The Return of Tarzan*, and when the feature proved popular enough to prompt interest in a Sunday version in color, Maxon inaugurated that in March 1931. Meanwhile, Foster's daily series had been re-issued in book form by Grosset & Dunlap in August 1929.

As Kane's book details, Burroughs, who was something of a cartooning artist himself, had appreciated and prized Foster's work. And Burroughs was not happy with Maxon, who he believed made Tarzan "look ridiculous." Neebe sought out Foster again, and by then Foster needed a way to make a living. By 1931, the Depression had whittled away at the advertising dollar, and Foster was suffering. On September 27, 1931, Foster replaced Maxon on the Sunday *Tarzan*, and for the next six years, Foster "ate ape," as he put it. And not just Foster. Kane points out that Foster employed four of his agency's artistic cohorts to do lettering, background penciling, some inking, and research for the strip, paying them out of his $75 per week salary, each of the five of them taking home $15 a week.

By 1934, Foster was feeling frustrated. He was not satisfied with the quality of the scripts he was given (often rewriting them) nor with his salary, which, by then, had been raised to $100. Besides, he didn't like doing someone else's character; he wanted a character of his own. As Kane shows, quoting letters, Burroughs, clearly valuing Foster's effort, urged the syndicate to raise Foster's salary again in order to keep him. But even an increase to $125 wasn't enough. The bug had bitten. Foster was dreaming of another feature—an adventure epic to be set in the days when knighthood was in flower. At about this time, too, King Features, impressed with Foster's increasingly stunning work on *Tarzan*, was courting him.

Foster told Joseph V. Connolly, president of King, that he had an idea but hadn't polished it. Connolly said, "You don't really need a story at all; come with us and we'll provide a story." "Well, that's just what I didn't want," Foster said. "I wanted my own story."

He picked the Medieval period because, he said, it "gave me scope." It also gave him freedom, the poetic license that is possible when there are very few written records to contest the tales he would tell.

In his stunning deployment of solid blacks for shadows in the 1929 daily **Tarzan** strips, Foster anticipated the chiaroscuro technique made famous by Noel Sickles and Milton Caniff.

At first, Foster thought he might tell a story about a young man going on one of the great Crusades of the middle ages. He soon realized that this conception imposed a limitation: after the Crusade, what would his hero do? Foster finally decided on a legendary past rather than a historical one, choosing Camelot and the days of King Arthur's Round Table. In his quest for realism, Foster researched medieval history, art, and literature extensively, producing a convincing aura of authenticity in *Prince Valiant*. But Foster's Camelot was not King Arthur's. The Arthur of history and legend lived in about 450-500 A.D. Foster moved the time of his story forward about 500 years because the costumes and pageantry of the later period were

more attuned to the popular idea of Arthurian knighthood, however mistaken that idea was historically. Within his chosen period, though, Foster was so thoroughly accurate that many of his readers regarded the strip as an educational adventure as well as a heroic one.

We don't see as much of Foster's Arthurian milieu in Kane's book as we might expect. (For *Prince Valiant*, the dedicated Foster fan must search out the reprint series from Fantagraphics.) But Kane has illustrated his text profusely with much more valuable material—fugitive drawings from the National Cartoonists Society's Reuben Dinner program booklets, Foster family Christmas cards, Foster paintings, advertising art, *Popular Mechanics* covers, and other miscellaneous unpublished art. Kane had access to the family files and found many photographs to help tell the story. And for sections that rehearse Foster's adventures by canoe with a friend and, later, with his wife (on their honeymoon), Kane uses both photographs and cartoon sketches Foster made of these forays in the wild.

TERRY, HAS IT EVER OCCURRED TO YOU THAT WE ARE LIVING A TRIVIAL, BEATING JUST SO MILTON CANIFF AND HAL CAN AVOID WORKING? WE GET TWO WEEKS WHILE THEY GET THE PAY-CHECKS. IN A FEW YEARS YOU AND I WILL BE PUNCHY AND THEY WILL BE PAUNCHY!
HAL FOSTER

(left) Foster at the drawing board from the concluding panel of a Christmas card. (right) Val and Terry Lee consider cutting out the middlemen.

In telling the early history of the Foster family, Kane betrays his fascination with history and research as well as a painstaking meticulousness, even identifying the month and date of magazines only partially visible in photographs. The nearly exhaustive detail of the narrative covering Foster's life and career prior to the creation of *Prince Valiant* is not, regrettably, continued for the balance of the book. We learn very little about Foster during the years of World War II, the sunny summer Eisenhower epoch, or the Vietnam period. In place of such contextual orientation, we find a carefully pieced-together description of Foster's working methods, taken from various articles and interviews with the artist. Valuable, informative, even insightful, but it merely whets the appetite to know more about the man and his creative processes. We discover much about where he learned to draw and who his inspirations were, but we find out almost nothing about how he learned to tell stories or about the sources of some of his tales.

In this respect, Kane's book is similar to most biographies and autobiographies of cartoonists. Autobiographies in particular reveal an apparent authorial conviction that readers could not possibly find the life of a cartoonist at a drawing board at all interesting. And yet, that's why we buy such books and read them. The classic in this myopic delusion is Boody Rogers' autobiography, *Homeless Bound*, which, in the total of its 200-odd pages, makes only passing reference to Zack Mosley (whom Rogers assisted on *Smilin' Jack* for years) and to Rogers' own strip (*Sparky Watts*) and comic book creations (he worked on the very first comic book—what he could have told us about this but didn't!). Instead, Rogers regales us with the adolescent humor of anecdotes about his high school football career and his life in the army, a punch line every other paragraph. But Rogers' book, while illustrative of a fault, is in a class by itself. And Kane's book is light years beyond it in every respect. Its shortcomings, which I have undoubtedly emphasized too much by even mentioning them, are inconsequential next to its achievement as a record of the life and work of one of the medium's most influential practitioners.

While Foster's talent and dedication as an illustrator and storyteller undeniably elevated the quality of the Sunday funnies, his fathering of the adventure strip can be quibbled over. The adventure strip had emerged in the 1920s, most notably in Roy Crane's *Wash Tubbs*, which, by the spring of 1929, had added the exotic and two-fisted Captain Easy to the rollicking fare. But Crane's strip was not realistically rendered: while backgrounds were often realistic-looking, his characters were bigfoot cartoon creations. In the history of the more illustrative adventure strips, Foster usually shares paternity with two others, Alex Raymond and Milton Caniff. Both came after Foster's impressive stint on *Tarzan*: Raymond in January 1934 with *Flash Gordon*, *Secret Agent X-9* and *Jungle Jim*; Caniff in October that year with *Terry and the Pirates*.

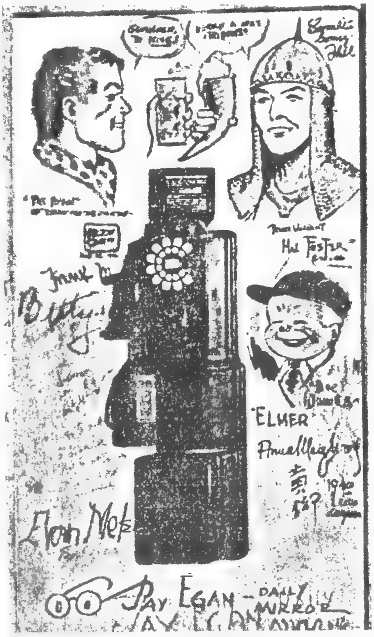
FUNNIES FARRAGO

Although Caniff's early work was more basic cartooning than illustration, he eventually, under the influence of his studio mate, Noel Sickles, achieved an impressionistic illusion of reality through the judicious spotting of solid black for shadows, the so-called chiaroscuro technique. Kane credits Foster with introducing this technique in his 1929 daily Tarzan. And while Foster was clearly deploying shadow in the same manner as Sickles and Caniff, he was not the inspiration for their efforts. Sickles was recollecting his youthful study of French Impressionists and their use of light, and Caniff was imitating Sickles. In any event, Raymond was more in the Foster mold than Caniff: both Foster and Raymond worked in the "every wrinkle must show" tradition (as Caniff put it); and Sickles and Caniff tried to suggest rather than to show. After the mid-1930s, most cartoonists producing realistic strips drew in either the Foster-Raymond manner or in the Sickles-Caniff manner.

Foster admired Caniff's work. During his last interview, granted when he was 87, Foster could recall when asked about his favorite fellow cartoonists the name of only one: "Milton Caniff. He wrote well, he knew how to be dramatic, and he had great artistic ability," Foster told Arn Saba.

Foster and Caniff corresponded in the early years of *Prince Valiant*. And in 1940, they met when Foster came to New York. They had dinner one evening at the Palm, a former speakeasy that Caniff frequented. (He told me once that it was almost a "living room" for him and his wife during their early sojourn in New York, and when he returned to the city in the 1980s, he took an apartment just a block away.) The walls of the Palm had been decorated over the years by numerous cartoonists, who, after delivering their work to the nearby offices of King Features, retired to the Palm for liquid recreation. Following a certain period of lubrication, they fell to defacing the walls of the place. Andy Gump, Dumb Dora, Jiggs, Mary Mixup, Smitty, Pete the Tramp, and others, plus countless caricatures of cartoonists, cavorted on the plaster.

After dinner, Caniff and Foster enhanced these merry murals by drawing their principal characters toasting each other in terms of their syndicates. Caniff drew Pat Ryan, lifting his glass and saying, "Gentlemen, to King." And Foster concluded the punning salute with a drawing of Prince Val, raising a ram's horn tankard and saying, "Merry—a nice Tribune" [Chicago Tribune/New York Daily News Syndicate].



Caniff and Foster enhanced the merry murals on the walls of the Palm by drawing their principal characters toasting each other in terms of their syndicates.

The pictures are still there, by the way, albeit obscured somewhat. In subsequent redecorations of the Palm, a wooden rack for waiters' orders was hung over the pictures. But the curious art lover can usually prevail upon the bartender to remove the woodwork long enough to display the art.

Foster once acknowledged the triumvirate of which he was a part, writing to Caniff: "If you and that other whipper-snapper—what's his name? Alex Raymond—if the two of you were only to die or somehow disappear, I'd have the field to myself. And then I alone would receive the adulation of the multitudes as the best funny paper artist in the business."

The ostentation lurking in this remark is a

deliberate pose, a sort of masquerade Foster enacted in a parody of self-importance.

"A lot of people thought he was a conceited bastard," Caniff told me. "He had this curious conceit. Understandably, he thought well of himself: he was so damn good. But I think people thought he was hopelessly and boringly conceited. But I don't think that was it. I think it was his way—this was his joke. He would say these bald things about himself—so bald that you'd say, Oh, shit. Then afterwards, you'd think, "Well, maybe he was having me on, pulling my leg." I think he was kind of shy. Very often, a shy person as famous as he was will be kind of flamboyant. I liked him. Admired his work, but I also liked him personally."

Foster tipped his hand often in letters to Caniff. "This letter might go on indefinitely for I am on a subject I adore—telling about me," he wrote once, "and there are so many nice things left unsaid that even I, strong man that I am, find my fingers flattening out at the ends from continuous pecking at this mechanical finger-dodger and must quit."

On another occasion, he wrote: "On these pages, you will find Hal Foster naked. Rambling, slightly incoherent, addicted overmuch to the use of 'I,' verbose and steadfast in only one purpose: never to take anything overly serious, not even H. Foster."

But if Foster didn't invent the adventure strip (and he didn't), in his Sunday pages—particularly in *Prince Valiant*—he gave the newspaper comics section class, and his illustrative style illuminated the possibilities for others, demonstrating on a grand scale what quality realistic illustration can do to enhance the narrative of storytelling comic strips. For that, he surely deserves the title Kane bestows upon him.

And Kane has given us more than a title for Foster: he has unearthed treasure for fans and students of comics. And for Foster aficionados, his book supplies information both visual and biographic that none of us could know of but that we all thirst after. The book may not be exhaustive, but it is purely a pleasure to read and look at. The handsomest of Vanguard's productions to date, it is available in both paperback ($19.95) and hardback ($29.95), the latter featuring delicious extended panels from *Prince Valiant* as end papers. Enjoy.

Next time, if Fritzi Ritz doesn't throw her nappy-haired niece out into the dawn of a wintry day to see if she casts a fireplug shadow that foretells another month of cold and snow, we'll pause to commemorate the retirement, almost a year ago, of another great adventure strip, perhaps the last best of the line, *Modesty Blaise*.

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Tarzan
by EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS
TARZAN OF THE APES!... THE MOST POPULAR ROMANTIC HERO OF MODERN TIMES.
HE WAS BORN IN A HUT IN THE AFRICAN JUNGLE WHERE HIS PARENTS LORD AND LADY GREYSTOKE HAD BEEN MAROONED BY PIRATES.
AS A BABY HE WAS CARRIED OFF BY A SHE-APE TO THE TREES... AND THE BEASTS LEFT HIS FATHER DEAD.
THE APES CALLED HIM TARZAN MEANING WHITE-SKIN. AND HE GREW UP AMONG THEM HE LEARNED TO SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE AND HE LIVED AS THEY LIVED, IN THE TREES.
WHEN HE WAS THIRTEEN, HE DID BATTLE WITH BOLGANI, THE GIANT GORILLA, IN THIS FIGHT HE WAS SAVED BY THE HUNTING KNIFE HE HAD FOUND IN HIS FATHER'S HUT.
WHEN HE GREW TO YOUNG MANHOOD HE CHALLENGED TERKOZ, KING OF THE APES, TO BATTLE. AND WHEN TERKOZ CRIED, "MAGODA...I SURRENDER," THE APE TRIBE MARVELED AND HAILED TARZAN AS THEIR KING
WHEN WHITE PEOPLE PENETRATED THE JUNGLE AND WERE SEIZED BY THE APES, TARZAN RESCUED THEM. THROUGH HIS KINSHIP WITH HUMANS, THE APE-MAN WAS PERSUADED TO GO BACK TO THE LAND OF HIS FATHERS
SUCCEEDING TO THE TITLE AS LORD GREYSTOKE, HE TRIED TO ACCUSTOM HIMSELF TO CIVILIZATION BUT THE JUNGLE WAS ALWAYS CALLING HIM... AND HE FLED FROM ENGLAND BACK TO THE AFRICAN WILDS.
AGAIN HE SWUNG THROUGH THE TREES WITH THE GAY FREEDOM OF HIS BROTHERS, THE APES.
ONCE MORE HE WAS ONE OF THE WILD LEAPING HORDE IN THE MAD DEATH DANCE OF THE DUM-DUM.
WHEN HE KILLED NUMA, KING OF THE BEASTS, HE WAS HAILED AS LORD OF THE JUNGLE.
THE JUNGLE CAME TO RESOUND WITH TARZAN'S CRY... THE WILD VICTORY CRY OF THE BULL-APE AT THE KILL... AND EVER-ONWARD HE WENT, THROUGH STRANGE FAR-OFF COUNTRIES FILLING HIS LIFE WITH THE WILD JOY OF THRILLING ADVENTURE... WAITS FOR THE NEW ADVENTURES OF TARZAN.

This wonderful page by Foster was drawn in 1933 for the purpose of introducing the strip to newspapers which had just picked up the feature. Not dated, it would have run in different papers on different dates. The original artwork for this page has never surfaced, and would be the ultimate Foster **Tarzan** original.

[continued from page 16]

using captions beneath, or within, the panel, and that the *Tarzan* Sunday "origin" page was created for papers to run prior to printing *The Return of Tarzan*, drawn by Rex Maxon. Joe Neebe, whose idea it was to adapt *Tarzan of the Apes* to the strip format, was inspired by previous strip adaptations of such novels as *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Pilgrim's Progess*, as well as others. These adaptations featured the text in blocks under the panels, and United Feature Syndicate directed Rex Maxon, who illustrated the first twenty-eight *Tarzan* Sunday pages, to place the text within the panels. So this technique was well developed before Foster ever came to the funny pages.

United Feature Syndicate developed a six-strip condensation of *Tarzan of the Apes* for newspapers who purchased the strip after the initial release date of January 7, 1929, not the special Sunday page "origin" which was drawn by Foster in February 1933, at the behest of UFS, for papers to run before beginning the Sunday page—and was to be printed in black and white.

An interesting revelation in this chapter is the fact that, when Foster took over the *Tarzan* Sunday page, he utilized his fellow artists at Palenske-Young as assistants: penciling, inking, lettering and research. There may be some who read the book that might discount this, wanting to believe that Foster was the sole artist behind the strip. However, this fact was confirmed on the early television show *This Is Your Life*, which featured the life of Hal Foster, as well as in at least two newspaper interviews, one in 1949 and the other in 1969. The only thing not known with any certainty is just how long Foster's co-workers assisted him on *Tarzan*. The newspaper accounts seem to indicate at least six months. But it would seem likely that it continued at least until the advertising agency's fortunes turned around, possibly for a year or two.

If I was asked whether or not there was any weakness or shortcoming in the book, I would have to cite the fact that, although there are several references to the sequence featuring "Tarzan and the Lost Egyptians" (1932-1934), there are no pages reprinted from this adventure—a major omission in my view. Having said that, for the reader who wishes to see these pages, they are readily available in the NBM *Tarzan* reprints.

Hal Foster brought *noblesse oblige* to the funny pages. The characters he illustrated were noble of birth and of spirit. They had a moral code that they never wavered from; everything in his pages was black and white, good versus evil, with no shadings of gray. Whether Tarzan or Prince Valiant, they were role models for all of us to emulate—then as well as now.

All in all, I cannot praise this book highly enough! It is well written, and the family photographs and previously unseen art make it a true treasure for those who admire the art of illustration. I say this about few books, but Brian *Kane's Hal Foster, Prince of Illustrators, Father of the Adventure Strip*, has my highest recommendation!

There is at least one illustration which needs further explanation. On pages 86-87 are printed three WWII political cartoons. The one of Santa Claus shoving war bonds down Tojo's throat and the one of the Yank and the Englishman are pretty self-explanatory. However the one of the blustering Nazi leaves the reader wondering just what is going on. This cartoon was done expressly for the first issue of *Marine Comedy*, Winter 1944. It was published by Martin Goodman and featured cartoons drawn specially for it by most of the King Features Syndicate cartoonists, as well as cartoons selected from *The New Yorker* and *Collier's Weekly*. The Foster drawing, from page 21, is captioned: "How ve became der super-race." The blustering Nazi goes on to state: "On der puss giffs it a big frown, like ve iss important. In der mirror ve frown and bellow: 'You iss superman!' Our newspapers say: 'You iss super race!' Und Herr Goebels says: 'You better believe dot!' So ve do.

"Und ve iss super-race too! Every country ve knock down und kick in der face iss weaker den us.

"Ve don't haff to steal or blackmail to get rich. Ve use 'Economic Stavbilization' on der victims und our neighbors pay us for de protection of der New Order.

"Ve iss under no obligation to be polite or well mannered; ve giffs orders! Vy should ve say 'please' ven we can shake der fist, roar der orders, und kick der pants?

"Americans could never be super-race like us. Ven dey see us frown und strut and 'Heil' und act important dey say: 'Don't be silly!' und laff demselves sick.

"UND DON'T DO DOT IN DER FUHRER'S FACE!"

—R.R.B.

This magnificent panel (or was it the whole page?) was rejected by King Features Syndicate in 1944. It was never printed in the newspapers, and the original was later destroyed in a fire.

[continued from page 17]

with Foster as a celebrity and art world superstar. The Prince Valiant movie is highlighted, along with Foster's 1954 appearance on the *This Is Your Life* television show. Page after page of wonderful photos of Foster with Babe Ruth, Janet Leigh and Victor Mature, among others, are presented. Even Milton Berle makes an appearance. Many rare pieces of correspondence are reproduced as well.

My favorite anecdote appears on page 130 and discusses what page Foster considered to be his greatest achievement. Foster considered a page from 1944 to have been "touched with genius." It turns out that the page was rejected by the syndicate. The rejection was personally motivated in an effort to "take Foster down a peg." The page was not printed. Foster subsequently water-colored the page and gave it to his son, Edward. Sadly, the page was destroyed in a 1967 fire. A stat of the 1944 page exists and is printed in the book! Not a happy ending, but as close as this story ever comes to one. The book is filled with this kind of interesting detail.

The end of the book covers Foster's medical problems and his last days. Even this section is fascinating because of the many anecdotes about dealing with rabid collectors' requests for original art. The very end of the regular edition features an extensive section of tributes from artists such as Murray Tinkelman, Carmine Infantino, Joe Kubert, Bill Stout, Mark Schultz and Barry Smith. Even longtime Foster enthusiast Robert Barrett contributes an essay of heartfelt thoughts.

I would like to focus for a moment on chapter five, dealing with the *Tarzan* strip, provocatively titled, "We Ate Ape." The information in this section is fascinating and thought provoking. Many fans and art collectors are puzzled by this period. The common opinion has always been that Foster was never happy with *Tarzan* and longed for his own creation. Given the quality of the strip, this sentiment has always been quite suspect to me. It seems that the depression forced Foster into accepting this assignment. He had been doing illustration advertising and magazine covers for the Palenske-Young Studios in Chicago, but the depression dried up all the advertising revenues. Obviously Foster had the common bias that placed comic book artists and comic strip artists at the bottom of the aesthetic ladder, with illustrators and painters on the highest rungs. He considered the *Tarzan* strip to be a step down in his career, but he had to eat, and reluctantly accepted the assignment. There is a suggestion that Foster allowed some of his backgrounds to be penciled by another artist. I question this a bit. Foster's backgrounds are so intricate and sophisticated in the way they coordinate with the foregrounds and the overall flowing design of the page. This point needs careful clarification.* In any case, the pay was poor and continued to be poor throughout his tenure on the Sundays. This was always a sore point with Foster and it ultimately led him to leave *Tarzan* and sign with a new syndicate. The interesting thing is that Foster appears to have been extremely proud of his *Tarzan* art. The quotations and letters cited in this chapter make this very clear. The common knowledge has always been that Foster disparaged this portion of his career and did not hold it in high regard. This book clarifies the issue quite clearly. I was quite happy to read these comments because I have always thought that *Tarzan* was the ultimate high point for Foster. He created most of it from whole cloth and set a new standard for artistry and dynamism. The *Tarzan* pages from 1932-1935 (that includes the fabulous "Egyptian Sequence") represent the finest art ever produced for the newspaper comic strip. Legions of artists rhapsodize about how influential this strip was. To this day, Al Williamson keeps a copy of the *Single Series* #20 comic book, which contains Foster Tarzan repros, at his drawing table. He calls it "the Bible." The debate between Valiant and Tarzan collectors rages on and will lead to interesting books and essays in the future. Kane's book has helped to keep the fire burning. This book represents the kind of private scholarship that I heartily endorse.

This lavish, limited edition (signed by the author and James Bama) is slipcased and features an extra art section with the complete *Song of Bernadette* comic strip and a few other illustrations to complete the section. The overall design of the book deserves comment. It is dignified and as stately as Foster's art. The text is large and readable; the images are liberally sprinkled throughout the narrative. There is a new surprise on every page. This is hardly a dry, academic treatise. The narrative flows briskly and is free of any academic pretentiousness. The credit for this goes to the author, Brian Kane, who did the initial layouts and image/story placements. Brian is a freelance artist who now teaches in the Illustration department at the Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio. The finished design and final prep work is the hard work of Meredith Pratt (wife of noted artist, George Pratt). I think Foster would have been very pleased with the look of this book. The publisher, David Spurlock, is to be congratulated for publishing a work that is both aesthetically satisfying and intellectually rich. It is the jewel of the Vanguard Productions line of collector's books. Buy it immediately.

*Clarification: Foster indeed had help initially on the *Tarzan* Color Sunday page. This fact was researched fully and this reviewer has since come to believe most of the first two years of *Tarzan* were the product of Foster *and* the Palenske-Young studio.

The Michael Naiman Report

WHITMAN UPDATE: As is usually the case, when one book hits a new sales threshold, other copies are soon to be unearthed from the closet to be offered to the public. The latest include: Little Lulu #260 GD/VG $710 (284X Guide) and another copy in GD/VG for $362 (145X Guide) Walt Disney's Comics and Stories #480 NM $112.50 (1.5X Guide); Uncle Scrooge #179 FN+ $215 (1.92X Guide).

AT THE AUCTION: A couple of months ago I made a comment about the state of comic book auctions in our hobby and actually received a few written responses and phone calls from some who disagreed with my take. That's OK with me. At least they had an opinion. Heck, they even read the article!

It got me to thinking about the auction business in general and how many sellers might not understand how it works. It got me to thinking about the whole process.

According to an article in the Detroit Free Press, A. Alfred Taubman, a visionary retailer and one of Michigan's wealthiest businessmen, was convicted of charges that he masterminded an international price-fixing conspiracy that rocked the world's largest auction houses. It was a stunning defeat for Taubman, a 76-year-old multimillionaire who insisted he was innocent of rigging prices with Christie's International while chairman of Sotheby's Holdings Inc. Testimony was heard that Taubman and Sir Anthony Tennant, the chairman of Christie's, agreed their auction houses would start cooperating and stop competing at a breakfast in April 1993 in Taubman's London flat.

U.S. Justice Department prosecutors said the rigged sellers commissions brought in $400 million during the six-year conspiracy, from 1993 through 1999. The price-fixing scheme generated additional revenues for the auction houses of about $15 million a year. MSNBC reports that Sotheby's and eBay will be unveiling a new Sothebys.com site within eBay this summer, featuring the high-end art, antiques, jewelry and rare books that Sotheby's now sells in auction houses around the world. Sotheby's has operated its own online auction site at Sothebys.com for two years, but indicated that the new alliance with eBay will connect it with a much larger audience through eBay's 42 million registered users around the world.

Some collectors and dealers have opined that Sotheby's couldn't make a go at it alone and now needs the exposure (and risk reduction) of eBay's brand name. One has to be wary and educate oneself before wading into this real life auction arena. There are lions out there. Be prepared for battle by suitably arming yourself with information. Ask some tough questions. And most importantly—READ THE CONTRACT! This is a real business, everyone. You're not having a garage sale here.

After getting a hard copy of the sales contract document, READ IT! How much is the commission? Is there a buy back if the item doesn't sell? Is the buy back based on the reserve or the estimate? (A "buy back" is a percentage that can range from 2-5% that is charged to the consignor for books that do not sell). Is there a charge for photos? Who pays shipping costs to return the item if it doesn't sell? Who pays for the insurance? Who pays for the packaging? How long must you wait for your money after the sale? Don't be afraid to negotiate some of the terms of the sale. If you don't ask, you don't get. What's the worse that can happen? They say no?

If you change your mind about reserves after consigning a book to the auction, what procedure is necessary to make the appropriate changes to your terms? In any business, one must ALWAYS "put it in writing" so that your desires will be memorialized. Don't call the auction house and leave a message with the secretary that you want changes made. This could ultimately prove economically disastrous for you.

One might also want to ask if there are books to be offered that are actually owned by the auction house. Do they get preferred treatment in catalogue placement and description? Might that not be a conflict of interest here when it comes to promoting the auction?

Will there be a large single owner collection being spotlighted in the auction? How will that affect your placement in the catalogue?

These are just a few items to be aware of. Read the fine print. Caveat emptor.

CBM MarketWatch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#31 VG $306 1.12X
#53 VG $160 95%
#54 FN $202 80%
#66 VF+ $595 1.24X
#399 VF $9 88%

Adventure
#102 VG $152 83%
#166 VG $65 79%
#267 VG $77 47%
#271 VG $50 83%

All American
#21 VG $500 95%
#73 VF $182 43%
#78 GD+ $61 90%

All Winners
#4 FN $636 70%
#8 GD $280 1.66X
#10 VG+ $400 1.18X

Amazing Spider-Man
#5 VF- $500 44%
#7 VG $150 95%
#8 VG $150 95%
#14 VF+ $1800 1.41X
#14 VG $300 Guide
#18 NM $1000 2.10X
#28 VF+ $500 1.60X
#34 VF $103 77%
#50 NM $1000 2X
#64 NM- $48 74%

Avengers
#1 VG+ $400 93%
#1 VG $338 79%
#2 VG $114 1.06X
#4 VF- $380 31%
#4 VG $250 87%
#4 VG+ $160 56%
#6 FN+ $90 1.55X

Batman
#7 VG $400 48%
#9 FN $650 67%
#23 FN $350 55%
#43 VG $150 71%
#65 FN $136 65%
#98 FN $150 1.02X
#101 GD+ $55 1.09X
#155 FN $88 95%

Batman Annual
#2 FN $85 98%

Beware (Marvel)
#1 VF+ $18 1.5X

Black Cat Mystery
#42 GD $38 1.80X

Blackhawk
#112 VG $31 Guide

Blue Beetle
#1 GD- $390 91%

Brave and Bold
#9 VG $51 55%
#28 VG+ $500 71%
#30 GD $75 55%

Captain America
#15 GD $325 1.03X
#31 FN $800 1.49X
#100 VG $60 90%

Chamber of Darkness
#8 NM $30 1.5X

Crackajack Funnies
#42 VG $80 Guide
#43 VG $72 Guide

Daredevil
#1 VF+ $1400 1.01X
#1 FN $450 97%
D e t e c t i v e
#104 GD $64 90%
#118 GD $107 1.10X
#176 FN $149 Guide

Dick Tracy
#40 NM $135 Guide
#59 VF $50 83%
#60 NM $95 Guide
#76 NM $95 Guide

Fantastic Four
#3 FN $500 93%
#7 VG $70 51%
#18 NM $207 64%
#46 VF+ $100 1.65X
#48 FN $226 Guide
#48 FN $151 67%

GI Combat
#87 GD $125 2.77X

Green Lantern (GA)
#13 VF $795 98%

Green Lantern (SA)
#50 NM $56 66%
#59 VF $50 36%

Hulk
#181 NM- $1000 1.11X

Iron Fist
#14 VF+ $100 1.43X

Jingle Jangle
#33 NM $25 42%

Justice League of America
#1 VG $500 1.90X
#16 FN $40 82%
#21 FN $40 43%
#37 VF $70 Guide

John Wayne
#31 VG $77 1.01X

Lois Lane
#13 GD $20 1.17X
#19 FN+ $36 71%
#23 VF $50 56%

Marvel Mystery
#22 GD $195 1.06X

Marvel Tales
#131 VG $40 61%

Mystery in Space
#59 FN $59 91%
#69 FN $35 71%
#78 VF $67 84%

Sensation
#16 GD $100 1.05X

Sgt. Bilko
#2 VG $44 55%

Showcase
#8 VG $810 51%
#22 VG $300 46%
#24 VG- $75 32%
#34 VG $110 51%
#38 VG $50 63%
#43 FN $95 77%

Silver Surfer
#1 NM $1000 1.90X
#2 NM $400 1.90X
#3 NM $400 2.35X
#4 NM+ $1500 3.12X
#6 NM $200 1.82X
#7 NM $200 1.82X

Strange Tales
#97 VG $134 1.56X
#115 FN $82 67%
#129 VF $20 57%
#157 NM $45 1.13X

Sub-Mariner (GA)
#30 VG $270 1.35X

Sub-Mariner (SA)
#1 NM $100 63%
#1 FN $41 94%
#17 VF+ $8.5 77%
#29 VF $5 61%
#34 VF+ $25 87%

Superman
#31 GD $110 1.1X
#45 VG $92 58%
#55 VG+ $74 56%
#76 VG $275 82%
#92 GD $56 1.19X
#125 GD $43 1.59X
#129 VG $36 67%
#138 FN+ $37 59%
#142 FN+ $38 76%

Tales of Suspense
#6 VF $416 1.77X
#15 VG+ $60 1.14X
#28 VG $40 1.13X
#58 FN $31 38%

Texas Kid
#1 FN $66 93%

Tomb of Terror
#10 VG $55 1.20X

WDC&S
#30 GD $50 1.09X

Worlds Finest
#50 FN $140 85%
#74 VG $106 1.10X

X-Men
#1 GD $495 89%
#2 VG+ $270 94%
#6 NM- $1000 2.66X
#7 VF+ $500 2.13X
#10 VF+ $400 1.68X
#25 NM $350 2.8X
#27 NM $350 2.8X
#35 VG $16 63%
#40 VF $20 37%
#48 VF $26 51%
#58 VF $90 1.29X
#65 VF $38 80%
#66 VF $60 1.25X
#72 GD $6.5 2X
#87 FN $14 1.46X
#94 VF+ $750 1.64X
#95 FN+ $56 1.4X
#97 VF $46 72%
#100 NM- $100 66%

MARKET REPORTS

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Greetings once again from the UK! The Christmas/New Year lull did not arrive as expected. It seems that comics were the presents of choice this past Yuletide. Sales of **Silver/Bronze Age rocketed** skywards before, during and after the festivities.

Spideys remained a firm favorite, but Daredevils were seen to be picking up pace on the back of the anticipated film release. DDs also benefit from the fact that they are wildly under-priced in comparison to books of the same age. CGC books keep coming in and going out with little problem. Generally, we are sticking with the VF to VF/NM range on **slabbed items**, as there is resistance to the silly money being splashed out on the 9.2s and above. Unless we have a buyer lined up, we won't lay out multiples of Guide, and would prefer to stock the lower high-grade stuff and price it at a small premium above Guide-for-the-grade.

Early into 2002, we held our annual **sale**, discounting anything VF and below. The result was a manic weekend with pretty much everything shifting, even some ratty '60s Superman, Superboy and World's Finest.

Finally, some **recent sales**: Avengers #93 VF+ $77; Amazing Spider-Man #41 VF+ $240; Luke Cage, Hero For Hire #1 VF/NM $60; Strange Tales #129 VF $40; Swamp Thing #1 VF+ $115; World's Finest #105 VG $25.

Dan Greenhalgh
Showcase New England
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Northford, CT 06472
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Greetings from Showcase New England. Not much has really changed in the past ten years—high grade Marvels continue to show strong leadership (and always have for that matter). The demand for these books seems more unrivaled than ever. Even low- and mid-grade books are holding steady and are coming closer to commanding near-Guide to Guide prices. CGC 9.4s and above for early Marvels are priced to perfection at the moment—fundamentally there is little room for **price appreciation** in the short to intermediate term (next two to three years).

Most dramatic price rises (the price spikes in the past two years have been spectacular) generally conclude in multiyear consolidations as a rule of thumb—which means it is time to be a little more cautious about what you are paying for books as they are likely to be cheaper in the future.

More and more it has become apparent to us that there are now **two grading systems** for comic books. That CGC has completely departed from Overstreet standards in material ways is irrefutable. We don't say this to be critical. Rather, we say this because it is creating some problems for us and, I suspect, others as well. Those interested in CGC grading are looking for structural perfection. The problem we have is best illustrated by the following example: If we send a structurally perfect book to a seasoned collector with average or below average paper quality with a CGC grade of 9.4, we get laughed at. If we send a book that is an Overstreet 9.4 in every way except for immaterial and very minor structural flaws to a collector of CGC graded books, we get laughed at. In most cases, all other characteristics being equal, the collector using Overstreet standards would be satisfied with the 9.4 in the latter example, and vice versa for the CGC collector in the former example. So, it begs the question: How do we satisfy both?

To address the differences in the two systems, we are considering assigning both a CGC grade to a book as well as an Overstreet grade. CGC grading focuses on structure at the expense of state of preservation, page quality, color and gloss. The proof in this is that a book can have NM+ characteristics across the board and the CGC grade will still only be as high as whatever the overall structure of the book dictates by their internal standards (not Overstreet's). Further proof of this is that a CGC book can be a 9.4 with sub-par paper (they disclose paper quality, but don't incorporate it into the overall grade)—an absolute never by Overstreet standards. Overstreet focuses on state of preservation, along with structure, color and gloss for a composite grade. In other words, it doesn't ignore any important characteristics of a comic book in determining a grade. We would certainly be interested in hearing how other collectors and dealers are reconciling the differences in the two grading systems.

Last year was a dry year in terms of the number of **collections** offered to us. This year has started off with a bang. We have been able to purchase three complete Marvel collections, a complete DC collection from Showcase #1 up, and an incredible collection which includes 300 or so Golden Age keys with virtually every important book printed from the major publishers like DC, Timely, Fiction House, MLJ, Continental, Quality, EC,

Atlas and many others—and the year has just started. Keep them coming!

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The back issue comic market is alive and well whether selling to collectors or dealers, slabbed or unslabbed. Dealers are feverishly trying to stay one step ahead of the competition trying to secure collections, and collectors are trying to stay one step ahead of the dealers who are trying to buy from their dealers—Wacky!

It seems as if the propaganda concerning the woes of the economy are a great concern to most of the country, but the comic market seems like a great alternative to the despair and roller-coaster affairs of Wall Street. Comic people are proving it week after week by opening up their wallets and continuing to set **record prices** on books. Get a subscription to the CBG and CBM and check out the weekly and monthly reports for items sold on the different auction sites and stores around the country/world.

I had an oddball eBay experience happen to me in December. I had a batch of books for auction ending on December 17th, one of which was a Fantastic Four #14 CGC graded VF 8.0. After checking on the results of my auction, I was surfing through the Silver Age section doing a little cross-referencing to see how similar books were doing. I noticed another person who had a FF #14 CGC VF 8.0. I clicked on the auction to compare books. "Nice looking book," I thought to myself. "Wait a second—that's my book!"

This person had **stolen my auction image** and put my book up for sale. Not only did the person steal my auction image, they had the audacity to put the book up for sale the day before my auction ended. I immediately notified eBay about this fraud being committed and emailed the people who had placed bids on the fraudulent auction letting them know that this person seemed to be attempting some kind of rip-off.

After a few attempts to report this to eBay I was emailed a generic response from them basically saying they frown on that type of behavior, but what do you want us to do? Pretty much a joke to attempt to get any action taken, even though someone was committing a blatant and obvious crime. Oh, by the way, they frowned on my alerting the people who were bidding on the bogus auction and I stand to be reprimanded for it if I do it again. It seems I was interfering with the person's auction results. Go figure!?!

I have been very fortunate in my comic hunting the past couple of months, purchasing some very nice collections of gold, silver and bronze age books. I have sent a number of them off to CGC and await their return. Others are being processed and will soon be ready to be put in the hands of happy collectors and dealers alike. Something for everyone!

Some sales: Amazing Spider-Man #19 NM- $325; Avengers #1 GD $25, #4 GD/VG $200; Batman #67 VG- $62; Batman Annual #7 FN+ $27, Detective #55 VG+ $19, #72 VG- $68, Fantastic Four #14 VFN $25, #48 NM- $865, Giant Size X-Men #1 VG/FN $175, Hulk #180 VFN+ $60, #181 VG/FN $175, Marvel Mystery #62 FN/VF $400, Marvel Tales #1 FN+ $54; Master #37 FN+ $172, #51 FN $107, Wow #24 VG $37; X-Men #94 VF+ $360

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Business hung in there for the holidays, little impacted by the events last fall. Seems that our regular customer base continues to find escape in the comics they read. That escapism is an important facet of their lives. New customers looking for the comics heavily promoted by the media (Amazing Spider-Man #36, Dark Knight Strikes Again, Heroes) have challenged us to meet demands we thought we had covered. Marvel's **no-overship policy** has affected us there. Subsequent purchases by other customers suddenly adding more Marvels to their want lists has become problematic. We've always purchased more Marvels than we could sell, intentionally. Less so with the other companies, DC included. But as bright as we are (having passed Marvel's IQ test) even we are hard pressed to predict the future number of new customers arriving at our store for Marvels above and beyond what we planned to sell-through months later.

DC Comics' **generous overship policy** may be losing money in comparison to Marvel, but I love DC for it. Gold and Silver Age comics move at the same pace. The only ones selling at an above average speed for us are Spider-Man titles. No surprise. We experienced a dramatic sell-through of X-Men comics when that movie hit. We were not nearly as prepared for the older, key X-Men issues then, as we are for the Spider-Man issues now. We've seen no other trends and discerned no surprises in sales or trends. It would be fun to see another hot trend energize the market, like pre Code Horror and Timelys in the past. Say, how about Westerns! I know two guys with a store in San Diego who are ready to tackle that bull by the horns!

Golden Age: Chamber Of Chills #24 FN $80; Crime SuspenStories #22 GD $27; Fight #53 VG+ $45; Frontline Combat #12 VG $22; Out Of The Night #11 GD/VG $29; Rangers #43 VG+ $40; Rulah #26 FA/GD $45, Spellbound #27 VG $32; The Thing #12 GD $90, #14 GD $90; Two-Fisted Tales #19(2) GD/VG $90; Weird Horrors #9 FN- $200

Silver Age: Adventure #282 FN- $54, #283 FN/VF $77, #293 FN/VF $85, #298 FN/VF $36, #325 FN/VF $25, Amazing Spider-Man #2 GD/VG $375, #39 VF+ $250, #40 VF- $275, #50 FN+ $150, Avengers #57 FN $23; Batman #209 VF- $15; Captain America #110 VF- $29,

#111 VF+ $36, #113 VF- $27; Daredevil #50 VF $14, #52 VF+ $16; Flash #145 FN/VF $41, #151 VF $76; Green Lantern #5 FN $84, #6 FN- $79, #9 FN- $54, #17 FN/VF $63, #35 FN/VF $41, #40 VF $266; Hanna-Barbera Bandwagon #1 FN $31; House Of Mystery #145 FN $16, #147 VF- $31, #151 FN/VF $24, #154 FN/VF $24; Incredible Hulk #103 VF $45, #108 VF+ $41, #109 VF $22, Justice League Of America #10 FN/VF $112, #26 FN $29, #28 VF $61, #29 FN/VF $59, #31 VF $57, #32 VF+ $57, #50 NM- $55, Marvel Super-Heroes #13 VF $18; Nick Fury #1 VF $41, #2 VF- $27, #3 VF $22; Silver Surfer #1 VF $247, #4 VF $229; Strange Tales #135 FN+ $36, #151 VF+ $29; Submariner #3 VF $18, #4 VF $18, #6 VF $15, #7 VF $15, #9 VF+ $16, Tales Of Suspense #46 FN+ $63, #58 FN/VF $117, #59 FN/VF $112; Tales To Astonish #49 VG/F $38, #56 VF $59, #59 FN/VF $68, #60 FN $46; X-Men #50 VF+ $54, #53 FN $19.

Bronze Age: Avengers #100 VF- $41; Batman #29 VF- $15, Tower Of Shadows #5 NM $28, #9 NM $31; Tower Of Shadows Special #1 NM- $25; Where Creatures Roam #4 NM $18, #5 NM $18, #6 NM $18, #7 NM $18, #8 NM $18; Where Monsters Dwell #9 NM $22, #10 NM $22; X-Men #96 FN.

Robert Letscher II

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Greetings from sunny Arizona! The overall market is clearly very healthy, as demand is more diverse than ever. New comics are enjoying the most popularity in years, thanks in part to such ambitious projects as The Dark Knight II, the Wolverine. Origins saga, Marvel's Heroes project and the "Ultimates" lines led by Spidey and the X-Men, and even "up and coming" publisher CrossGen, with their breakout hit series Sojourn. The great news for back-issue sellers such as us is that demand is now ranging from the Golden Age gems of the '30s and '40s right up through the modern back issues of today! (Yep, even the previously cold "Ice Age" books from the '80s are actually finding new interest, and Bronze-age comics have never been hotter!) What a great time to be in the hobby!

Demand for DC **cover production art** from the Jack Adler Collection is growing with each passing week. Most fans rave over it when they get that first piece in their hands, which makes for plenty of repeat customers! Prices have been climbing rapidly, with even eBay showing rather impressive increases. (eBay is typically a real "buyers' market," with lots of bargains for those willing to risk receiving over-graded books from unskilled graders and the occasional shady would-be dealer. However, recent eBay sales of Adler covers in the $200 range show just how strong the demand is for these rarely-seen glimpses into comic book history!) Some fans who bought numerous pieces early on, in the $75 to $100 range, are already re-offering the pieces with opening bids in the $200 range. As these are the next-best-thing to the black & white line-art which typically sells for four-figures, it's no surprise that interest is high on items from this exciting discovery.

With record sales occurring on an almost monthly basis, and more dealers offering comic-book auctions than ever before, it is clear that there is no shortage of serious fans & investors willing to spend big bucks to obtain unrestored copies of major key books. This is likely to pull the values up on solid mid and lower grade copies, as there is a finite supply of **unrestored books**, and more and more buyers are competing for ownership! Fans that once were dead-set on owning "VF or better," are now often getting priced out of the market. So many of them are now grudgingly accepting slightly lower grades to finish out the run or fill-in a needed key issue. Unless they win the lottery, what choice do they have?! This bodes well for the market as a whole. So strap in for the ride, as the coming years look to be quite a roller coaster!

Recent sales: Kamandi #2 Cover Four-Color Separation $180; Mr. Miracle #5 Approval Cover $150, #7 Hand-Colored Cover Art $225, #12 & 13 Cover Four-Color Separation $200 each; Superboy #154 Approval Cover $90, World's Finest #178 Approval Cover $94, #217 Cover Acetate Color Separation $150.

Random recent sales: CBM #6 (NM) $25; Dark Knight Returns #1-4 (NM Set) $100 trade; Meridian #1 (early CrossGen) CGC 9.8 $41; Origins #1(NM/MT) $30; Ultimate Spiderman #2 (web-swinging cover) $31.

Matt Nelson

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Greetings from the South, where we're gearing up for another Mardi Gras here in New Orleans. The year 2001 proved to be one of the most turbulent years in recent history, an ironic sendoff to a very fruitful decade for both the economy and comic books. The winter has been slow as usual, with people holding off on their spending until the holidays are far behind them. If last year taught us anything, it is to be more careful with our money, advice many collectors are taking as sales seem to be more constricted to **"must-have" books**. Chasing fads don't seem to be of much concern these days.

But then again, we still have summer to look forward to! Once the show season warms up this spring, so will sales across the board. The question is, what will sell this year, and what won't? I doubt we'll reach the same level of intensity on CGC books we saw in 2000 and 2001, although they will be setting records all through the year, and will continue to do so for a while. Keep an eye on the cheaper, **overlooked material** that has been languishing for years, such as romance and war.

Recent sales: Planet #2 FN- $1300; More Fun #57 and #58 APP FN each, pair for $1000; Cap #1 missing centerfold $3000; Captain America #59 VG $600; Fight #50 FN $54; Archie #10 VG $124; Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis #1 FA/GD $205!; Mystical Tales #7 VF/NM 9.0 CGC $81, Walt Disney Comics & Stories #30 VG $129; Flash #105 FA $100, Showcase #22 FA $77, Swamp Thing #5 NM+ 9.6 CGC $83.

Scott McAdam

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Greetings and Hallucinations. Here we are again reporting the market. Since I no longer have my store I can only report eBay and show sales. I have known for a long time that in actuality, comic and collectibles are only worth as much as someone will pay for them. There are two main ways to do business in these fields. The first, and the way that I go about it, is to care more about **how much I have paid** for items and not how much "THEY ARE WORTH." Book value is like holding a rock and sellability is like holding an apple. This is not even a "ROCK" you can bash your enemy in the head with, but this apple can feed you, clothe your children and pay your rent. Now you are saying, "Get off the philosophical soap box" and you would be right. But in today's market I am paying prices that allow me to sell almost anything at 50% off book and still at least double my money. I have been selling comics for myself or other people since 1976. Back in the '70s books were cheap and many people collected old comics.

In the '80s a few less people were collecting old comics but they were prevalent in stores and bought both new and old, in most cases. In the '90s special covers and "HOT" new books enticed the collector to buy multiples and save them until they "WENT UP IN VALUE." Little did they know what they got themselves into at that time. I guess I should come to the point. I have been selling my comics at a discount for years and find that for the right price almost anything will sell. **Dollar comics** from the '60s to '80s are good sellers when it is the right stuff.

Marvel Silver Age and especially Spider-Man and Fantastic Four have done well lately on eBay with the "BUY IT NOW" feature. Getting 70-80% of book value on semi-key books. DCs have not done quite as well unless they are 1957 and earlier or very obscure. DCs are fetching just over 50% up to 65% in a few cases. Some do not even get a 50% bid.

Here are a few **examples** of books that sold and did not sell on eBay (book values follow in brackets) Amazing Spider-Man #15 VG-FN $100 [125], #16 VG $65 [85], #18 VG-FN no bid at $49.99 [50%], #20 VG-FN $77 [100], #101 VG-FN $28 [35], Fantastic Four #48 VG $110 [$150], Avengers #100 VG $15 [$15], Strange Adventures #117 FN- $81 [$135]; JLA #9 VG+ $55 [$90].

Golden Age is funny too. VG+ Batman #27 valued at $425 only reached $207 (far below my 70% reserve).

Buy low and sell low is the way to make money. I never see any "HIGH GRADE" books worth speaking of, even worse worth "SLABBING" (WHICH I HATE, BY THE WAY, BUT I WOULD DO IT TO GET TO THOSE CUSTOMERS). Thanks and see you at Wonder-Con 2002.

Bruce's Comics

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Hello out there in comic book land! It's Mardi Gras here in New Orleans and people are comin' back to the city. How are comics doing? eBay is a hit-and-miss proposition for comics; one week an item will get thirty hits, but the next week the same item may only see two or three hits. CGC has helped sell product by **reducing** the number of **returns**. Unfortunately, unless it's a key book or something graded 9.0 or better, the comic is usually not worth sending to CGC.

Sales: Suspense #3 FA/GD, Funny Pages #2/7 VG, Funny Picture Stories #1/7 VG, all three $3700; Spider-Man #12 VF $400, #14 NM- 9.2 $2500; Tales of Suspense #40 GD $120

Joseph Serpico

Classic Comic Investments
www.classiccomicinvestments.com

How many of us contemplate the long-term outlook of our collectibles market? I believe a good many of us do, for a few fleeting moments, anyway. The trend has been upward for so long, sometimes spectacularly so, that it is easy to take for granted that this will continue for many years to come. I am not suggesting I have any crystal ball, I do know general economic cycles, and it stands to reason the comics collectibles **back issue market** will eventually suffer some sort of severe downturn, but who knows when or why? I have heard some reason that as the fans grow older, with less incoming fans to replace them, due to a decades long trend of decreased sales, there will be less demand, and that would reflect in lower prices. There are those who believe the back issue comic market is overpriced already, and a correction is unavoidable, much like what the stock market has experienced over the last 55 years or so, as there has been major long term bear markets in stocks in 1946-1949, 1973-1974, 1980-1982 and 1999-? When this has happened, the decrease has been anywhere from around 25% to 40%. There are those who contend, and this is really going far out in the future, that many books will just not age over **150-175 years**, thanks to the poor standards of paper used. Some feel that a good number of books are priced as they are due to astute market manipulation on the part of a group of core dealers and collectors.

There is probably a kernel of truth in all of these scenarios. I wouldn't hold them up as gospel though. It stands to good reason that the higher-grade, scarcer, key important books will hold their value and continue their escalation

THE MARKET

The first appearances of Superman, Batman, Spider Man, Wonder Woman and so many well-known, iconic figures. I believe that these books, and many like them, are **sure-fire** blue chip investments, whatever grade they may be in, although the higher the grade, the better. The early issues, the origins of these characters and many other American mass culture figures originating from comics, are fine investments. And there are many second-tier books which also fit into this category, from more recent times and back to pre-World War II. Many of these books are tied up in collections and probably will be for a time. Not to say there isn't a load of good material available. But most average collectors/investors, sad to say, don't really own much in the way of true quality blue chip material—some don't want to, some can't, some don't have the knowledge. I have seen, over and over again, sellers who have the impression that when they sell the books, a brand new luxury car is awaiting them, only to be stunned to hear the realities. One of the factors that make these books valuable is the scarcity of them, so naturally the pool of owners will be tight. I would repeat what has been discussed ad-nauseum. Collect what you like, divest your investments, be prepared if the market takes a downturn, educate yourself on what is a true blue chip quality book, a fluid, solid investment, and don't be discouraged by the occasional loss. Over time, with patience, the profits should far outnumber the errors. And if, or when, the market takes a serious downturn, just look at the upside: a great buying opportunity for investors and collectors alike.

Sales: Action #78 $213, #381 $44; Adventure #212 $90; Amazing Spider-Man #1 $1025, #158 NM $61, #159 9.6 $47; Astonishing #8 6.5 $95, Brave and Bold #73 9.2 $62; Dark Mystenes #15 7.5 $173; Detective #378 9.2 $51, #441 9.4 $68; Eerie #1 7.5 $585; Fantastic Four #67 9.4 $280; House of Mystery #189 9.4 $134, Jimmy Olsen #25 8.5 $95, #131 9.4 $106; Lois Lane #4 5.0 $81; Spectre (1968) #3 9.2 $68; Strange Adventures #12 8.5 $301; Tower of Shadows #8 9.6 $76; Uncanny Tales #53 8.0 $38; Wolverine #3 9.6 $40; Wonder Woman #181 8.5 $34, World's Finest #176 8.5 $24; X-Men #143 9.6 $35.

Michael Tierney
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The slumping marketplace throughout the Nineties was flooded with **brooding anti-heroes** and stories that placed all their emphasis on shock value or titillating "bad girls." Even the idealistic Amazing Spider-Man—"With great power comes great responsibility"—slapped his pregnant wife so hard she went flying across the room with a bloody mouth. In the first issues of the re-launch of all his series, he abandoned his "responsibilities" as Spider-Man altogether, thus completing his metamorphosis into a dysfunctional slacker. Not exactly the type of hero long-time readers were accustomed to. Sales plummeted so far that, even with the talented J. Michael Strazynski now writing one book, in my stores new Spider-Man comic sales are still a shadow of their past selves.

Why? The makeup of my customer base explains it: Many of my customers who twenty years ago first shopped with me as children are now police officers and prosecuting attorneys from several cities, teachers, and military personnel—from intelligence officers to C-130 pilots to ground crew trainers. They have gravitated to roles in society that require "great responsibility," becoming real-life heroes. Since the September 11 tragedy, a large number of these customers who had dropped out of the comics hobby during the Nineties have returned, if not just to say hello, to search for those higher ideals that were once a trademark of the comics industry. My customer base had been shifting over to young girls buying manga, but recent shoppers have resembled the more traditional, predominantly male crowds from the Eighties. Here are some examples of not just WHAT was selling, but WHO was buying what. Uncles Scrooge #2 (Four Color #456 "Back to the Klondike") VG+ for $95 was purchased by the head of the local university library (and member of the local school board). The Amazing Spider-Man collection I purchased months ago previously only had one person (a high school teacher) buying them. Recently, he's had competition from the military and police.

Amazing Spider-Man #2 FR $112, #7 GD $60, #14 (1st Green Goblin) GD $105, #19 VG 43.50, #20 (Origin & 1st Scorpion) VG+ $70, second copy VG $39, #22 GD $22, #23 VFN $89, #24 FN $36, #33 VG $29, #41 FN $38, #47 FN+ $19, #55 GD $12, #56 FN+ $19, #80 NM $17, #81 NM $30, #83 VF $11, #83 VG $11, #86 VF+ $36, #87 VF+ $27, and Annual #2 VG+ $19.

That's a lot of activity for what was dead stock, and it wasn't due to anticipation for the movie. Other recent **dead stock Marvels** that suddenly turned hot again are, Fantastic Four #44 GD+ $9, #45 VG+ $14, #47 VF+ $38, #48 (1st Silver Surfer/Galactus) VF+ $119, #49 (2nd Silver Surfer/Galactus) VG $45, #62 VG $9, a run of the #80s all in VG+ for $9 each, and #92 VF $19.

There's no talk of a movie, but there was some fresh activity on Thor/Journey Into Mystery: #110 GD $11, #121 VG $14, #136 VG+ $14, and #144 VG $8.

A few quick examples of older DC sales are: Adventure Comics #313 VG+ $14, Demon #1 FN $16; Flash #169 (80 page Giant "New Origin") FN $21; Justice League of America #72 VF $23, and a Golden Age Superboy #7 GD $75.

It's been good to be revisited by old customers, and while they haven't found new comics with the kind of stories they remember, those older gems—the type of comics that inspire people to achieve a higher ideal, with characters who actually smiled—have greeted them one more time.

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.

[continued from page 10]

primarily Western reprints. Among the most popular were *John Wayne, Billy the Kid* and more obscure titles, such as *The Phantom Ranger*. World would obtain interiors, and would employ artists to re-create covers as they had no facility for painted color reproduction from American originals.

One answer to this was provided by Master Artist Walter Howarth. He almost single-handedly illustrated World's output of Western comics and annuals for the UK.

Walter's talents were two-fold: he was very fast, and he could reproduce like-for-like without any problem. Around this time the output of Western material took up all of Walter's time, as he not only painted the covers to the annuals, but illustrated interior texts, and devised fact pages and games for them. Which brings us back to John Carter of Mars. World Distributors produced the *Super Thriller Annual* in 1958. This featured the illustration from *FC* #488. Or did it?

In a more just world, would this have been the cover of a fourth issue of John Carter of Mars? **Super Thriller Annual** for 1959, signed by Hodges.

I asked Walter, who is now in his seventies, if he could remember how this book came about. He seems to feel that this may be one of his illustrations that he copied from a Dell original, as it does seem to be his style. But our main mystery is the *Super Thriller Annual* from 1959.

This apparently features the same character in another action-packed moment, but as far as I have been able to ascertain, has not appeared anywhere else. There is a small signature from the 1959 annual: "Edgar Hodges." The name was a mystery to me.

Walter, however, remembered Edgar Hodges. He worked for World Distributors for a short time, and then left to go into greeting cards illustration, which he did for the rest of his career.

So what conclusions can we draw? The original *Super Thriller Annual* was comprised of text stories and a humorous British-drawn strip. This must have been fairly successful, and I assume World decided to publish another the following year. This would be about the time Walter was so busy with his Western work as cowboys were at their peak and World possibly asked Edgar Hodges to come up with a similar design to the one that had proved popular the year before.

I think the mystery of John Carter of Manchester has been solved! Now watch somebody prove me wrong!

Gary Watton, England

Naiman Report reply

As always, the newest issue of *Comic Book Marketplace* (November, 2001) was terrific. I can always count on *CBM* for thoughtful, well-researched, engagingly-written articles on a variety of subjects from the mundane to the truly esoteric.

Imagine my surprise when I came to "The Naiman Report" and your assessment of the current state of comics auctions. You quite rightly point out the advent of the field (Sotheby's December18, 1991, auction), but then go on to opine that live comic auctions are a thing of the past! When the heck did you write that? Not recently, I hope.

Anyway, please alert your readers that live comics auctions are alive and well at Heritage. Our first Signature auction, held here in Dallas, Texas, was an enormous success, realizing over $960,000 in sell-through for a very pleased group of consignors and bidders. Of 846 lots, 703 found new homes in a venue that included a live bidding floor, Internet bids through eBay, Live Auctions, interactive online bidding on our website beginning four weeks before the actual live event, and spirited bidding via phone, fax and mail.

Let me address a few of the other points you made:

"Any yahoo with no background in the field can easily obtain a slabbed book and throw it up for grabs online. Quick and easy. No comic book expertise needed."

This may, on the face of it, be true for online auctions, but certainly not here at Heritage. Not only do we pride ourselves on our "comic book expertise," but we also solicited the advice, opinions, and talents of some of the foremost experts in the field for our first catalog.

Then you add, "No large investment in a catalog."

Anyone who's seen our November 2001 catalog knows that we spared no expense. We're talking 160 full-color, glossy pages with full-color images of almost every lot in the sale, each fully described. Not to mention the really cool silver-foil enhanced cover.

"No expensive advertising."

Do full-page ads in *Comics Buyer's Guide* every week for five months count?

What about ads in leading numismatic publications, designed to bring new buyers into the hobby? And have you seen our website? Heritage spends well over $1 million in advertising each year. Hardly pocket change by any standard.

"No grading knowledge."

All the books we offered in our November auction were graded or reviewed by experts with many years of experience in the comic book field.

"No hosted previews."

We invited anyone interested to view lots in our Dallas office for ten days leading up to the live event, and many came. Lot viewing was available to anyone interested on both the Friday and Saturday of the sale. In addition, every single lot was pictured on our website, with full-color, enlargeable images of both the front and back of each comic.

"No free grub."

Our live event was a catered affair, with plenty of free food provided for all attendees. No bidder will ever go hungry at a Heritage auction!

"Now all we are left with is the P.T. Barnum get-rich-quick approach to comic collecting sponsored by the Johnny-come-lately big-money corporations."

Who other than "big-money corporations" can afford all the amenities you seem to insist on? Who else can afford to produce the nice catalogs, do the advertising, provide the free food, etc.? With that being said, however, I do agree that anyone in the comics auction business employing a "P.T. Barnum get-rich-quick approach" deserves to fail. Yes, there's money to be made in this field, but certainly not quick money.

I can assure you that Heritage, which happens to already be the largest collectibles auctioneer in the world ($60+ million in coins and currency auction sell-through in 2001) could pick many more lucrative fields to expand into than comics. Heritage chose comics because co-owner Jim Halperin happens to love comics! Our catalog and website were produced by fans and collectors who love this industry and this art form, and who are now fortunate enough to be making a living in it.

Finally, you say: "One publicly held company apparently learned a hard financial lesson about these 'investibles' and canceled its fall auction. In fact, they're out of the comics market entirely."

True again, lucky for Heritage. When given the opportunity in late October, we immediately purchased Greg Manning's entire comics and movie posters customer list and all account records. Since then we have recruited over 2,000 new HeritageComics.com web community members, and 20,000 subscribers to our free weekly newsletter.

Sorry to be so long-winded. Let me just add that Heritage will be holding its next Signature event in Dallas March 15-17. In fact, we'll be auctioning, among many great properties, the personal Tarzan art and movie posters collection along with other awesome comics-related art belonging to and consigned by your very own Editor-in-Chief, the illustrious Russ Cochran. And I can assure you that Russ would never have chosen to work with a "get-rich-quick" company. I invite and encourage you, Michael, and all your readers as well, to join Russ and the Heritage crew here in Dallas. Come see for yourself that the live auction venue for comics remains vibrant and healthy!

John E. Petty,
Director Heritage Comics Auctions
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Thanks for your response, John. It caused me to think more about the auction process in general. Please read my "rant" [page 70] for this month! Always good to hear from you and Jim!

Michael Naiman

What was it?

I hope you can help me. When I was very young I found a rather strange comic under my seat at the cinema. This would have happened, I am estimating, around the late 1970s. I can't remember the title but there was one very creepy story about a 19th century couple (I presume 19th century from what I remember of their clothes and horse drawn sledge) that elopes to a cabin in the woods. However, they become snowed in, I think, and she becomes very ill and dies. He has more than a problem accepting this, though, and goes on behaving as if she is still alive. The last scene is a back view of the couple

taking off in the sledge—I think he intends to bring her back to her parents. As far as I can remember the comic strip was in black and white.

I'd really love to find out a bit more about this comic and would really appreciate if you could help me. I'm nearly 100% sure that the comic was American. Does it sound familiar at all?

Marie Diviney, via e-mail

Short and bittersweet

Re. *CBM* #87: Beautiful, beautiful job on a sad, sad event (the passing of George Evans) Thank You. Looking forward to your Johnny Craig tribute issue.

David Dellario, Kensington, CT

Dear Mr. Cochran

Or can I just call you Russ? *CBM* #87 was a book-filled bonanza! With George Evans cover to *Crime SuspenStories* as your cover, I was hooked! The interviews with, and tribute to this under-rated EC great showed how sharp and articulate he and his art were. I was surprised at how clear his memories of events which took place nearly 60 years ago were. Obviously I, and a great many fans, will miss him. I look forward to your issue that will spotlight the life and career of Johnny Craig. Speaking of EC, what do you think of reprinting the line full-color and comic-sized a la DC's Archive Editions?

I agree 100% with Jim Steranko! There, I said it! After reading letters in *Comics Buyer's Guide* from people who want to burn him at the stake for his comments, I was ready to spit nails! Thank you, thank you, for giving Jim the opportunity in an unbiased interview to expound his ideas in a manner that even the fanboys who read *Wizard* can understand! Like any super-hero story, Jim used a degree of violence as part of the action but it was never overly graphic or gratuitous. His Nick Fury was smart, skillful and above all a trustworthy leader! If I want to be depressed, I'll turn on the nightly news. I'll not pay $2.00 and up to read a story about a "hero" who is as sadistic as the villain he opposes. Most of the heroes I read about changed so as to be unrecognizable by the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the "Modern" age of comics. Steranko fought to expand the boundaries of comics, not to degrade them!

Russ, I'm liking your influence on this magazine. Keep up the great work!

Eric G. Blackmore, Lewisburg, TN

I want to commend you on the fine job you are doing with *Comic Book Marketplace*. I for one am deeply interested in seeing the publication expand into related items like non-sports cards, premiums, original art, pulps and the like. I would also like to know more about your own projects through the years.

I also appreciated your salute to Country and Bluegrass music in the latest issue. I am enclosing a film George Pratt (*Enemy Ace: War Idyll*) and I produced called *See You in Hell, Blind Boy*. It is the history of the Mississippi Delta Blues told through the eyes of an artist. It is yours to keep. I hope you enjoy it.

Again, thanks for the great job! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Steven Budlong, Ridgefield, CT

Vox Popular

You asked for criticisms. I see or hear of very little interest in cartoon strips. I've been a collector for close to 40 years and folks want to talk about the new Spider-Mmn or X-Men movie—not original art!

CBM #57 dealt with the Legion—issue #63 celebrated Superman's 60th.

Other *CBM*s featured X-Men and Justice League—current stars folks can compare and relate to! I've stayed with *CBM* as it is something older readers can write to and relate to. EC, Horror and the like are "dead in the water."

CBG is popular as it encompasses most everyone with a strong bent to the silver age! DC and Marvel survived—a whole lot of the stuff didn't! Batman, Superman, Spider-Man and X-Men reaches the motion pictures for a reason! Get an interview with the cast of *Spider-Man* or *Smallville* and there is general interest. Even Adam West was sold in *CBM*.

Richard M. Brown, Detroit, Michigan

Thanks for your letter, Richard. If I have learned one thing by publishing the last several issues of CBM, *it's that it is impossible to please everyone with our selection of content. As you see from the letters in this and other recent issues, there are those who want to see more about newspaper strips and those who agree with you that we should not feature them. We get letters wanting more Frazetta articles and letters wanting none. We hear from readers who enjoy Golden Age articles and don't care a whit for Silver Age or Bronze Age comics, and vice versa. To paraphrase Abe Lincoln, we are able to please some of the people all of the time, and to please all of the people some of the time, but we will never be able to please all of the people all of the time. So each issue of* CBM *contains a mixture of articles and features which we hope appeals to the broadest possible audience. Letters like yours are important, though, in helping me decide which areas need to be emphasized more. It's a balancing act! I hope that*

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you and other readers of CBM *will continue to voice your opinions to help guide me as I walk this tightrope.*

RC

Whitman variant

I am enjoying your erudite magazine as much as ever. Just received issue 87 and with great interest read Michael Naiman's report. I wanted to make an addition to his compiled list of DC Whitman variants. I have a Whitman issue of *Batman* #308, edited by Julius Schwartz, written by Len Wein and art by John Calnan & Dick Giordano. The story's villain is Mr. Freeze and is titled, "There Will Be a Cold Time in the Old Town Tonight." Thanks for producing such a high quality product.

1LT Daniel S. Green, ME

Buscema fan

It's hard for me to realize that a great legend like John Buscema has passed away. A man like this is immortal. He's immortal through his artwork that he did for Timely and Marvel. I grew up with John Buscema and his departure from our world is a great tragedy. His work in which Archie encounters The Punisher was one of my most favorite crossovers. I wanted to personally thank John for making this crossover work! John is really going to be missed by the comic book community, his work will live on forever and his greatness will always be in every comic book aficionado's heart. John, thank you for making my life happy through your artwork! Godspeed.

Paul Dale Roberts, Elk Grove, CA
Jazma Universe Online!

Interview overview

Love the new *CBM*, glad you're at the helm. If I may, two things caught my attention in *CBM* #87. First, the George Evans interviews—loved them. The only thing I would have liked added would have been a round table discussion of George's work from those currently influenced as well as anecdotes from pros of that era.

Second, the Jim Steranko memorandum and interview (?). I agree that 9/11 was a terrible tragedy and has affected us all in ways I am sure we cannot ascertain. Beyond that, there was little said in those five pages that registered with me. Sure there are more vigilante/mercenary type characters out there today, but anyone who has visited a comics shop in the last ten years was already wise to that trend. As well, regarding adult material I think the Comic Book Marketplace (like the way I snuck that plug in?) is not the risk-taking environment it was in the 80s. In short any Evil material wouldn't be touched by distributors let alone get to the store manager's level. In future, I hope *CBM* sets the agenda for interviews because I would have liked the interview to go places it didn't, although it was a coup to get the Steranko interview in some respects.

Mike Egan, via email

What are they?

While sorting through some boxes I had in storage I found two *Chicago Tribune* comic strip booklets featuring Peanuts from March 10, 1968 and July 7, 1968. My guess is that there may be several other issues in one of the boxes around here. The books are oblong, unstapled and about the size of a normal comic book, they have newsprint covers, are 16 pages in length and full color. You can see scans at: www.terracom.net/~yellowkd/chbr1.jpg and www.terracom.net/~yellowkd/chbr2.jpg. I don't see them listed in my copies of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* though I don't have the newest edition. I'm curious if you know anything about them, especially whether they were part of a larger series. It looks like they were done to promote a new series of trade paperbacks by Holt Rinehart and Winston. I'm also curious if these only appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* or were syndicated nationally. The *Tribune* during this period also ran huge (an entire two-newspaper-sheets big) posters of their comic characters—not only *Peanuts* but *Dick Tracy*, *Brenda Starr*, *Moon Mullins* etc. As such it's possible that this was a production unique to the *Tribune*.

It brings up an interesting side issue in whether these are comic books and how the *Guide* handles such items. *The Spirit* Sunday section has always been listed as well as the *Chicago Tribune Comic Book Magazines* of the 1940s (and many of the Marvel newspaper insert giveaway books of more recent vintage). Other similar items often are missing. A major example is the *Classics Illustrated* Sunday comic book put out in the 1940s. In 1946 it ran as a companion to *The Spirit* section in the *Chicago Sun* newspaper in Chicago. Same format: 16 pages of an issue of *Classics* which were serialized over four issues. What makes these more interesting is that the *Classics* newspaper supplements are the original first printings as they appeared (like *The Spirit* sections) before the comic books were published. These, however, don't show up in the *Guide* though I notified them myself years ago of their existence.

Any help you or the readers could supply would be most appreciated.

George Hagenauer, Verona

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